

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN."

BOOK III.

CHAPTER III. THE COURT OF APPEAL.

THE case of "Ross and Davis," from the St. Alans Assizes, had been on the list for argument, and its turn had now come round. The judges were in—the Chief Justice (Bagshawe), the Lord Chief Baron (Ryder), Barons Ridley and Mossop, Justices Bond, Woodcock, Cox, &c. They sat in a long row, in their robes, like the Roman Conscript Fathers waiting for the Gauls in the Capitol. The counsel were "in" also, dabbling among their papers, the great unemployed waiting behind, cutting the benches, occasionally whispering, and thus learning the great profession to which they belonged. Before the case began, there was a good deal of light gossip on mundane points of interest.

The court then "sat," and Mr. Bagstock, rising, began to "open the exceptions" to their "P'dships," in a low, dreamy, and almost confidential manner.

The Conscript Fathers, not yet comfortable in their places, drew in their chairs, whispered, and smiled to each other, looked abstractedly at the ceiling, all except a little dried old judge, with a glass, who kept his eye warily on the counsel, as though he had been told off specially for this duty, while the rest took their little *délassements*. He had a printed book open before him, up and down which his sharp eyes travelled quickly, darting a look at the counsel every now and again, to see that he was not engaged in some elaborate scheme for deceiving the court, or in performing some hocus-pocus with his authorities. That professional gentleman, however, went on calmly with his duty, as if he were reading aloud to himself privately in his own study, and not at all affected by this universal inattention. At last, after some twenty minutes or so, when the counsel was beginning to warm to his monotony, the Chief Justice began to look down at his book, asked his neighbour a question, who laid his finger on a paragraph; and presently, from a remote judge in the corner, who was getting interested, or who had misapprehended

the learned gentleman, came a question, like the first gun before the engagement.

Mr. Tillotson was there, behind his own attorney, who whispered him, "Did you try again at a compromise? I see they have got Bidder. He leads the Queen's Bench by the nose. Can do what he pleases with the Chief."

"But," said Mr. Tillotson, "where are our men?" He saw only a void in the front bench, and a smart junior of no more than two-and-twenty, scribbling away, but looking every now and again a little nervously at the door.

"O, by-and-by," said the attorney. "Mr. Cobham is always late. But I wish we could have got Bidder. I was only a day too late for him."

Yet it did not seem how Bidder—an old man, a kind of legal fossil, too, who was with difficulty spitting out his facts, who had a dreadfully mouldy air, and whose high collars were worn fearfully at the edges, like a saw—could be such an acquisition on either side. But Mr. Tillotson very soon saw what quiet power and superiority was in his dry, unflagging monotony. Sometimes a too eager junior judge struck in:

"As it seems to me, Mr. Bidder, your view goes so far as this: *A* writes to *B*, on family matters, and among other things says, 'he may never know what flaws may be discovered in our title.' Surely you would not contend that *that* amounted to a declaration *post lis mota*."

Other judges nodded, as if to convey that that view was pressing on their minds, and the Chief Justice added, "I think my brother judge has furnished us with a *reductio ad absurdum*."

Not noticing this interruption, Mr. Bidder said he was coming to that, and would merely call their P'dships' attention to the case of Doe against Rubber, reported in—the (looking at the back of the book)—Sixth Common Bench, in which the point was raised, and I will read a passage from Lord Bendigo's judgment, which, I think, bears strongly on the case put by Mr. Justice Igoo.

This modest statement was more than borne out by Mr. Bidder. It seemed exactly "in point"—and utterly silenced Mr. Justice Igoo. Then Mr. Bidder went on the even tenor of his way, always at the same dead level, neither rising nor falling, keeping to his straight barren high road of monotony. He gave cases—Common Bench—Vesey, junior—Text-books—dicta—everything

—and when he sat down, alarm was in the opposite attorney's face, and he had begun to look anxiously for his counsel.

Mr. Tillotson also had been troubled at the absence of Mr. Cobham. The tender junior was in a sort of fever. Their lordships had adjourned for ten minutes, and clerks were going in all directions looking for Mr. Cobham. But a messenger from his house had come to the court, and gave to the solicitor a note, and that gentleman, in a flutter of annoyance, put it into Mr. Tillotson's hands, with a "There, we're done!" Mr. Cobham had been taken ill in the night with an inflammation, was something better now, but daren't get out of bed for a week or more.

The state of the tender junior was pitiable. "What can I do?" he said. "I never made an argument in my life. I have only been called two years. The whole thing is in a muddle."

"Just try and ask them to put it off. He won't, I know, but—"

"Now, Mr.—er"—the Chief Justice was saying, looking about, "the other—er—side."

The falling tones of the tender junior were then heard, stating his leader's misfortune, the serious character of the case, and bleating a request that their lordships would be so kind and indulgent as to, &c.

"Ah! that we *never* do," said his lordship, with a smile, "except in extreme cases. You know our practice here. If *all* the counsel were ill, or something like what is known to the Law as the act of God, had interposed, it would be a different thing!"

"But, my lord," implored the junior—

"We must go on," said his lordship. "We have *you* here, Mr.—er"—and his lordship paused a second, in the view that some one would supply him with the name, which, however, no one knew. "I have no doubt you will be able to assist the court very materially."

Thus was this tender junior launched. How the unhappy legal babe—for he was no more—hobbled and staggered, and floundered, and went back again, and got into the marshes and morasses of a hopeless country—how he was helped out, all wet and bemired, by a charitable judge, who gave him his hand, thus: "As I take it, Mr.—er"—with the best intentions, he had to pause a second also—"what you are contending for is this," putting a view the junior never dreamed of, nor could understand, but which he assented to with a wild eagerness, and then floundered back into his bog. How the Chief Justice, losing patience, became sarcastic, and when the junior said it was laid down in "Taylor" that secondary evidence of a letter, which was in existence, could not be received, and that he would presently find the passage for their lordships, he averred that so far the court was with him—all this and much more may be conceived.

The other counsel was not called upon after "Mr. Bidder's *exhaustive* argument." The Chief

Justice said it was not necessary, and the court adjourned to give judgment on a future day. "We're done," said the solicitor to Mr. Tillotson, as he got up his papers—"smashed." The miserable junior went home thinking of suicide, passed a wretched night, saying to himself he was ruined for ever, and could never show his face, took refuge in desperate study, got another chance, and ten years later was that efficient junior, Mr. Mounsey, whose name we meet with so often in the reports in the familiar parenthesis ("with him Mounsey").

On the future day the court met to give judgment, "polishing off a lot of cases together," as an irreverent barrister said. The court was, however, divided on the question. The charitable judge had been at the pains of "making up" the whole case for himself, *without* the aid of the junior, a few of the other judges had views of their own, and the Samaritan judge delivered an elaborate judgment in favour of the appellant. Some of the judges were absent, not having heard the whole argument, but the Chief Justice, who held that Bidder, a class fellow of his own at college, was bound up with the constitutional law of the country, gave his judgment last, and for "the respondent Ross." Even then the colour was made to rush violently to the cheeks of the miserable junior (several times during the past few nights on the point of getting up to look for his razors), by the Chief Justice saying that "the court, by an unhappy fatality, had not been assisted as much as it might have been, and the case, he might so say, had been overweighted on one side." At which pleasant conceit a flutter of obsequious hilarity ran round the barristerial amphitheatre. By a narrow majority of two the appeal was dismissed. Still, this did not finally dispose of the matter, for, as the Chief Justice remarked, the appellant could still take his case to a yet higher court, where it would no doubt receive all the consideration it merited at the hands of that high tribunal; and where, if there was anything faulty in their decision, it would no doubt be set right. Then, with an air of relief, each judge put away the papers in the now defunct case, and the crier called a new one very lustily.

CHAPTER IV. FURTHER DOUBTS.

DURING the days between argument and judgment, little Mrs. Tillotson had been observed to grow very anxious and troubled, and the curious wistful look in her face intensified. Mr. Tillotson, who every day was finding himself more and more incapable of understanding or following her curious moods, was grieved to see this, as he always understood that she was perfectly indifferent to the result of the suit. Now she was almost pettishly anxious. But he could give her no comfort. The faithful captain saw this also, and was greatly mystified by it. But he was not at a loss for comfort. "Why, the other side hasn't a leg to stand on, my dear. A very experienced counsel that I know told me so. I know I wish I was as sure of my salvation. I

wonder," added the captain, wistfully, "if they would let us manage things in the sensible way they do in France? I am afraid you can *hardly* go to the judge and offer anything of *that* kind" (his hand was on the steel purse). "Hardly, I think. He's too tip-top. But I know, when I and Colonel Cameron went over to Paris after the peace, we got into some foolish 'footy' row" (another favourite word of the captain's), "and knocked down a tradesman fellow, and was taken up and brought before a Shoes de Pay. And, egad, a very nice Frenchman, that took us about and dined with us—as gentlemanly a young fellow as ever stepped—put me up to it; and faith, we both went together and called on the Shoes de Pay, quite a nobleman, my dear, and before we went he took three napoleons of mine, and wasn't the least offended. Wasn't it odd? No, we could hardly do that to the judge."

It has been mentioned that she was of an excitable and spasmodic turn of mind, taking hold of new things, and especially of matters which were likely to be withheld from her, with an eagerness proportioned to the denial. She began to fret and chafe about the decision of the court. She confounded Mr. Tillotson by saying, one evening, that it was the only thing she had to look to, for if it failed she would be a beggar.

"A beggar!" he said, in astonishment. "My dear child, surely we have a sufficient fortune?"

"*Ah! you have,*" she said, with great energy.

He shook his head, and could not understand her. That very day, at their dinner, she suddenly, as it were coming to a resolution, said very nervously, "You know those Miss Tilneys?"

He looked up. "Yes," he said, "a little—a very little."

"A *very* little," repeated young Mrs. Tillotson, colouring, and with something like scorn. "And why don't you see them now? I thought you were quite intimate."

"You know," he answered, quietly, "they live away from town. But would you like to know—"

"Ah! I dare say," said she, trembling. "It would be a nice arrangement! Suppose we asked one of these Miss Tilneys on a visit?"

"Miss Tilney on a visit!" he repeated, wondering; then gave a sigh. This wearied him. "Why should we do that? You would not care for them, or like them. I have never spoken ten words to them in all my life."

He said this so firmly and truthfully that she became silent, and saw that she was mistaken. She puzzled and mystified over it, and consulted with the grim Martha.

"Ah! that is what Mr. Tillotson says. Of course *he* would like to tell you everything. Why should you know the secrets of his life before marriage?"

"But I believe him, Martha," she said, firmly.

"Ah! of course you do," said that cold waiting-woman. "If I had only time. No matter."

She hardly slept the night before the judgment, and it was her pressing importunity and eagerness that forced Mr. Tillotson to give up business and take her down to the court. She sat there, working herself into a fever, and with her hands clasped, listening to the judges as if they were bishops and clergymen. But she could not understand or follow them, and it was long before she could see that she was the being alluded to as "the appellant," or follow the mysterious advantages or losses which fell to her side under that description. With a little pencil she checked off "her judges" and his judges. And it was with the most mournful hopeless face in the world that she struck the balance. She never said anything, but rose to go. Mr. Tillotson pressed her arm.

"Don't lose hope, dear. We may win yet. Everything was a little against us."

As they passed out, the first person they met was Mr. Tilney, who came from the body of the court, and who seemed a little anxious to escape observation. He was the old Mr. Tilney wonderfully recruited, and with the old stick which he had carried away from St. Alans.

"My dear Tillotson," he said, "and Mrs.—Am I right? Ah, yes. This is very painful, my dear Tillotson, and I am really concerned, I am indeed. And though I wish our wild friend well, naturally, you will allow, still you know what I must feel to you, Tillotson, who have stood by me shoulder to shoulder, as I may say. Goodness, goodness! when I look back! But still, our friend's victory, so far, is a mere stage—a stage. It may topple over like a pack of cards. By the way, they are waiting here, in the cab. Ross has run away, to speak to his attorney."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Tillotson, deeply feeling for his wife. "We must go now. Another time."

"But they will want to see you, my dear friend. We *never* see you. And there—do you see your old friend, Ada Millwood, in the window? Ah, sir, sir! She will never forget that night. A noble girl, sir, that deserves to be well settled in life."

The eyes of young Mrs. Tillotson were literally devouring the devotional face, with the heavy golden hair, set in a tiny bonnet, that was looking from the window. "Ada Millwood!" she repeated, as her breath came and went very fast.

"Yes," said Mr. Tilney; "this way. Of course she will like to know *you*, Mrs. Tillotson—a sort of curiosity, you know."

Mr. Tillotson knew not what to do. Those restless little eyes were wandering from his face to Ada's, and he became a little confused. A sudden light came into Mrs. Tillotson's eyes, and she read off the solution to what had been puzzling her for so long.

It was his first meeting with Ada since that night, and no man had ever more firmly and loyally carried out what he had proposed to himself. With this confidence in his heart, he went up straight to the cab where the Angelico face was, as it were, unworthily framed. That Angelico

face brightened as he drew near. He took Mrs. Tillotson's little hand, as he said, "Miss Millwood, this is my wife." The young Mrs. Tillotson was still looking at her with restless eager eyes, almost dazzled by the sight. She only answered in some strange confused words, for her heart was beating with anxiety and anger.

Ada received her with a smile, and the very light of interest and welcome in her soft tranquil eyes. "I don't know what to say," she said; "but *indeed* I feel for you. We have been accustomed so to think of our side, and wish for his victory."

The little lady tried hard to answer coldly and with dignity that "she was very good and kind."

"But," Ada went on to Mr. Tillotson, "I have thought of something. Ross is ordered away to Gibraltar—is going in the morning—and, somehow, is in a softer vein. Leave it to me. He has his good points, and can be generous when he chooses. It is very miserable to go on this way, and for *her* sake."

This she spoke in a sort of semi-confidence to him. The light of the old St. Alans days and nights came into his face. He forgot the succession of events, the revolution almost, that lay between, and said, gazing into that gentle face, "Always kind and thoughtful."

Mrs. Tillotson felt herself a poor insignificant cipher here. At that moment the gentleman she had seen at Bangor came up hastily. He was in great good humour. "Well, Tillotson, I saw you in the court. I have beaten you again this time, and I can sail to-morrow with comfort."

Deep reproach and anger was in the eyes of the fair-haired girl. "This is Mrs. Tillotson," she said. "Don't you see?"

He coloured a little. "Well, perhaps I do. O, I beg your pardon," he added, awkwardly. "I did *not* see you. Well, you can't expect me to say I am sorry, and that sort of thing. Confound hypocrisy! But still, I wish it was some one else that was 'appellant,' as they call it."

Ada smiled. "Ah! that is better!" she said. "We must go now. They are waiting for us. Good-bye!" she added, almost fondly, to Mrs. Tillotson. "I am so glad to have seen you; and don't be cast down. Something may come about to put all right again, and for all parties. I shall let you know," she said, "Mr. Tillotson."

They separated. Mr. Tillotson, as they went home, found himself unconsciously dreaming away back to St. Alans, to the shadow of the old cathedral, even to that Sunday when the music was playing, and he had heard Fugle sing and the dean preach.

CHAPTER V. THE VISION OF AN ANGEL.

MRS. TILLOTSON, with a sort of fury tearing at her little heart, looked at him now and again with a strange inquiry. But she spoke scarcely at all, and then only very shortly. When they got home, with an effort he had finally put away far from him the luxury of that dreaming, and had frozen back to the cold material of business.

She had flown to her room. There the grim

Martha came to her, with something evidently on her austere mind. "You were asking me," she said, "about those Tilneys the other day. I think what I said was not received with pleasure—certainly not believed. Well, I have now found means to make out the whole truth."

"And so have I, so have I, Martha," said the unhappy little lady, almost sobbing. "I see it all now, and the meaning of their solemn denials. Even nunkey to deceive me! But he kept to the letter of the truth."

"And didn't I warn you?" said Martha; "do me that justice. I knew what men of that sort, gloomy and mysterious, must come to. A pity young creatures will not be said and led."

"Yes, yes, Martha," she said. "*And O, she is so lovely, Martha, no man born could resist her.* I am like a low common creature near her."

Mr. Tillotson, for the rest of this day, got absorbed with the business world. By night, the glowing colours of that old picture had grown cold, and faded out. Duty had shut up the camera, and thrown wide open the shutters. The dinner went by in the old routine. He fell into his weary toleration, for he saw there was a grievance, and, after the dinner, went back to the study and to the business.

As he sat there, towards nine o'clock he heard a cab drive up, and presently a servant came to tell him a lady wished to see him. An instinct told him who this was. Other ears, too, heard the unusual stoppage of the wheels at the door, had heard the subdued voices in the hall, and the shutting of the study door.

Presently Mr. Tillotson was in the drawing-room where his wife was sitting, the small lips compressed together, and her cheeks flushed. He entered hastily.

"She is an angel!" he said, eagerly; "she has done what she said. Come down to her and thank her."

"Who?" said she, with a trembling voice. "Who am I to thank?"

"Ada Millwood," he answered; "come. She is sitting in the study. She has been at that Ross the whole day, pleading your cause. She has prevailed, as such an angel's temper *must* prevail always, and he has agreed, even now on the eve of his departure, to enter into some sort of compromise. He has some generous instincts after all."

She looked at him with the same restless and eager eyes. She knew that she could not find the proper words, and that she could not trust herself to speak. Suddenly she got up. "Let us go down to her," she said, "and thank her at least."

They went down. Ada ran to her, and repeated her good news. "There," said Mr. Tillotson, with glistening eyes, "see what good friends God has given us. To-day everything was against us, and this kind angel has changed the face of all things. All is well now."

"Hush!" said Ada, softly. "You make too much of it. You know what I owe to you! *Indeed*, I would do more if I could."

"I dare say," said the young wife, with forced

coldness; "and I do thank you for your good offices, but I do not require them;—I should prefer that this matter went on to the end."

"Went on to the end!" he said, in astonishment. "What *can* you mean, dear?"

"That I should wish to see it go on. I don't want to have it settled. And, as far as I am concerned, never *shall* settle. Of course, if you choose to assert the power the law gives you——"

They both looked at her in astonishment.

"But you know," he said, calmly, "only this day you said you were longing that it could be arranged. That was even before it was decided. How much more, now? Consider it calmly; especially after Miss Millwood has taken all this trouble."

"Did I ask her?" said Mrs. Tillotson, with a trembling; "was it my request? *You* might have settled it with her. But, of course, arrange it as you will. I have merely said what is *my* wish. As long as I live, I shall never agree. There!"

"That is decisive," said he, calmly. "There has been some misapprehension, evidently. I am deeply grieved Miss Millwood should have had all her trouble for nothing, and it only remains for me to thank her most cordially for her goodness."

"I am sorry, too," she said, sadly. "I think it would be the best for all. But no matter now. You will forgive me, I am sure?" she said to Mrs. Tillotson.

The other answered her coldly, and turned to go, as if she could not trust herself to stay.

"You do not want me," she said, in the same voice, looking from one to the other, "any more, do you?"

The golden-haired looked at her anxiously and sorrowfully, Mr. Tillotson with wonder.

"Well," he said, "it can't be helped. It must take its course, then."

Mrs. Tillotson, flushed and excited, said goodbye, and went up-stairs again. A few moments afterwards the cab rolled away.

Then Mr. Tillotson went to his young wife, and very quietly expostulated with her. "I am sorry you did not tell me this," he said, "before: it would have saved a world of inconvenience. Of course you know what is best for your own interest, and if you would listen to me, there is yet time. My dear child, be advised. Besides, to Miss Millwood, who has been so kind and generous, it is scarcely fair, and——"

Flaming in her cheeks, flashing in her eyes, the little lady burst out: "Ah, that is it, it seems! We have given *her* trouble! That is the offence. Ah, I am beginning to know—I am beginning to see—how I have been deceived."

"Deceived!" repeated he, gravely.

"Yes, deceived; but no matter. I know why you are so anxious to settle this business, and the scheme is—I have friends still who will tell me, and find out everything for me."

"You are angry now," he said, still in the same grave tone, "and foolish. But I can make every allowance. I am sure, my poor child, you cannot mean what you say, and if you will take

my advice, you will not listen to these friends, as you call them."

"Ah, I dare say," she answered, eagerly, "that would suit very well. But I shall not give everything up without a struggle. O, I have heard, and shall hear more still. And it was unkind and cruel, and *not fair* to conceal from me all that went on down at that place at St. Alans. I know all that! I do! Now, what do you say?"

He shook his head sadly. "If you only knew or could appreciate why it was everything was not told to you! But no matter now."

"O, they were good reasons, no doubt," she went on. "But I was kept in the dark purposely; yes, you know I was" (she was on the verge of sobbing now); "and about other things, too, as well, for which, of course, you had your reasons."

Mr. Tillotson drew a deep sigh, and covered his face with his hands. "We will never understand each other, I fear. What is all this about?"

"Why should you not have told me everything?" she went on. "I am not a child. It was unfair. And all these mysteries! I ought to know; I am entitled to it. What does it mean?" she added, her excitement increasing. "There should have been confidence. I ought to have been told everything—*everything*. Really, this gloom and all. Who knows, as they say, what has been done, or——"

"Stop, stop!" he said, almost imploringly; "don't speak about that, or in that way." And a strange expression of physical pain came into his face. She did not see it, and went on:

"I ought to know, and they tell me that I ought. I am entitled to it. Why should I have married into a heap of mysteries? Why should there be these secrets, unless there is something wicked concealed, or something one has done that one is ashamed of, or has on their conscience?"

"Stop, stop!" he said again, and in the same suffering voice. "Don't touch on *that*! Go away; leave me quickly. This is very cruel, and should not have come from you."

There was some one standing at the door who had heard the voices from above, and come down. Miss Diamond was looking on with amazement. "Hush!" she said; "come away. This should not have happened. See, he is ill and suffering."

He did, indeed, seem overwhelmed, and in a sort of agony. His face was bent down to his desk. She was a little scared, and ran up to him. "You are not ill?" she asked, anxiously. "I did not mean it, indeed—no. But they have worried me so lately, and this disappointment to-day and all, and I am a *little* miserable; I am indeed."

He looked up kindly. "Perhaps you did not mean it," he said. "I am sure not. But don't harass me. I tell you solemnly there is nothing in my sad history that you can be repaid by knowing. Anything that is right or necessary that you should know, I have always told you. You are very young, and have yet to learn how dangerous it is to touch on things which had

best be left untouched. But it is very late to find all this out—too late, perhaps.”

Miss Diamond took her away, a little awed, and perhaps a little scared. When she was out of his sight, the old grievances came back, and she poured them all out to her companion, who soothed and tranquillised her. But from that night the vision of the golden-haired haunted her like a spirit, fretting her into a fever, inflaming her into little furies. From that night, too, arose the sense of what he had called a fatal mistake; and from that night, too, a chill and thick cloud settled down between the husband and his young wife.

PONIES.

Of all the sights of London in the month of June, there are few prettier than Rotten Row at that hour in the morning when grave judges, merchants of mighty name in the City, and the hard-worked of her Majesty's Cabinet and her Majesty's Opposition begin to ride away to their daily never-ending duties, while the Park is alive with little mobs of boys and girls galloping, trotting, and walking as little as possible, with papa or mamma, or sister Anne, or mostly with some stout and faithful Ruggles, panting and toiling after his precious charges. How bright they look, how happy with innocent excitement glowing on their rosy faces! No thought of heavy acceptances or of doubtful parliamentary contests, or of ungrateful minister of state, checks their ringing laughter, or their cheerful and childish talk. And then what pluck the little creatures have, and how gravely they imitate their seniors, in handling ponies a little bigger than Southdown rams!

In those admirably planned and picturesquely arranged rides in the wood, provided by the Emperor of the French for the inhabitants of his capital, the splendour of the equipages on a great fête day—a Gladiateur day—leaves nothing to be desired. Our Ladies' Mile is left in the shade by the splendour of a series of four-horse postilioned barouches, with liveries of every brilliant shade of velvet and satin, from the brightest canary to the richest ruby, beside hosts of grand steppers in Broughams, and other triumphs of carriage-building art well copied from the London style. Horsemen are there, too, in very fair numbers, to whom a critical eye would most probably object that the horses are too good for their work, and that the men ride too well, too correctly, too seriously for pleasure—that they are perfectly taught, but are not to the manner born. Yes, the wealth of modern Paris rivals London in everything that is gorgeous for grown-up people. But when it comes to the little people and ponies, Paris is a blank.

Pony-boy-ship, not horse-man-ship, is the crowning glory of these equestrian islands. The word pony is feebly represented in other languages by two words implying little horse or dwarf horse, and the French have been

obliged to borrow the term without being able to borrow the thing. In the brilliant horse show at Paris the other day, there was only one pony. In the horse show at the Agricultural Hall, the ponies were as numerous and as much admired as the thorough-breeds. There are small horses in many countries, but it is only in this among civilised nations that the let-alone system of education allows the family pony to develop into an institution. Good horses and horsemen are not confined to England. The Chasseurs d'Afrique, on their little wiry hardy Arabs, the Hungarian Hussars, the Polish Lancers, the Cossacks of the Russian Guard, may claim to rank with any light cavalry; Russian and Austrian coachmen drive fast and well, three or four abreast, in their own peculiar style; so, too, there are foreign artists who know well how to draw the single Arab, the war-horse of Job, or a whole charge of cavalry, but it is only in England (meaning the three English-speaking kingdoms) that John Leech could have found his immortal boys on ponyback; above all, that genuine Master George on his Shetlander, his soul on fire speaking in his eyes, and eager for the hunt streaming away on the other side the brook, answering the piteous “Hold hard!” of the much-enduring Ruggles, “it's too wide and very deep,” with the happiest self-confidence, “All right, we can both swim.” Master George did not mean to be saucy to the old coachman, or to be witty, like those royal and imperial boys who make such wonderful *bon-mots*—he only meant, in the language of the Ring “business,” that there was a brook to be done, and dry or wet Master George meant to do it.

The family pony, ridden at all hours, with and without saddle, along bridle-roads, over the moors, in the hay-field, and through the wood, up hill and down dale, teaches the boy to go alone, to defend himself, to tumble cleverly, and to get up again without making a noise at a bump or two. As far as teaching the art of horsemanship goes, perhaps the completest plan with boys, as well as girls, is to allow no riding until they are eight or nine years old, and then to commence with first principles. Still, habits of independence are of more importance than perfect horsemanship, therefore fathers living in the country with a stable as well as a library, if wise, will not neglect the pony-branch of education, but will let the boy, as soon as he likes, go wandering about the park, the farm, the village, learning how to take care of himself and his steed. With girls it is different. A girl can no more learn to ride gracefully than to dance gracefully without being carefully taught from the first lesson to the last.

Real ponies, not dwarf horses, bred without care on waste moors and mountains, are more sound than horses of pedigree; perhaps because, like Indians, only those of stout constitutions survive the hardships of infancy or foalhood, and also because only the best are sent for sale out of their native district.

The common defect of ponies is straight thick shoulders and want of a proper place for the saddle. This is general among the pure mountain breed; probably hereditary grazing and exposure to the weather are not favourable to perfection of shape. Welsh ponies have a well-deserved reputation, but it can scarcely be said that they are of any particular breed. Since civilisation spread into Wales in the shape of rich squires and thorough-bred sires, the owners of mountain herds have freely availed themselves of Arab and racing crosses. The best ponies are always found in places where the hilly nature of the country creates a demand for small horses, and where wastes on which full-sized horses would starve, offer room for them as well as for small cattle and mountain sheep.

Somersetshire and Devonshire, like North and South Wales, are famous for excellent ponies, because in hilly regions small horses do all the work of the country better than the full-sized animals, which Yorkshiremen seek to breed and London dealers try to buy. In the great horse-breeding counties, no one intentionally breeds a pony, or even a small hack. These dwarfs come by accident in the course of attempts to breed tall hunters and taller carriage-horses.

In Wales and North Devon, a well-shaped pony is the best hack, and what would be called a pony in the pasture counties—say fourteen to fifteen hands—the best hunter. Throughout North Devon and Somersetshire, and wherever ponies are famed, the Exmoor breed have a great reputation; not without reason, for they are not only hardy and sure-footed—from their earliest years the foals follow their dams at a gallop down the “crees” of loose stones on the steep moorland sides—but they are extraordinarily active and courageous. The writer once saw an Exmoor, only forty-four inches high, jump out of a pound five feet six inches high, just touching the top bar with his hind feet. But Exmoor ponies are an example of the inevitable effects of food and climate. The late Mr. Knight, the father of the present owner of Exmoor, expended a fortune in trying to raise a breed of horses and larger ponies of these wastes. Thorough-breds, Arabs, and even the rare Dongola horse, imported at a cost of thousands, were used; but, after all, in order to breed a race capable of living through Exmoor winters, it has been found necessary to fall back on pure pony breeds, and be satisfied with an average height of a little over forty-eight inches. Among these, while all are excellent for harness, occasionally specimens occur which reproduce the blood and the symmetry of noble ancestors.

The Shetlanders are undoubtedly of a Norwegian stock, but, according to a doubtful tradition, owe their thorough-bred look and parti-colours to crosses with sires saved from the wreck of the Spanish Armada. At any rate, from selection, or some other cause, Shetlanders are to be found, much more thorough-bred than the dun cobs of Norway. Some of the

finest specimens of the blood ponies ever seen in this country were from Sardinia, presented by the present King of Italy to our Queen. They were Arabs in miniature, from ten to twelve hands high, of a better shape than Arabs usually are, with that “quality” and “courage” which are the cardinal merits of the African blood-horse.

In choosing a pony on which your boys are to learn to ride, take one as much like a good hack in shape, and as little like a donkey, as possible. In a large woodcut by John Leech, of the First Meet of the Season, there is a serious drawing, not a caricature, of a perfect blood pony arching his neck proudly, and champing his bit. A donkey is a very useful animal, but he is the worst possible tutor for future horsemen, because he has no mouth, or rather a mouth of leather, which never objects to being pulled.

A boy's pony should be narrow, so that his little legs can have some real grasp. The fat round barrels of the cob-model are very well for carrying baskets or side saddle-pads; but a boy, when eight or nine years old, and that is early enough to begin to ride, should be able to sit in as good form as when, in later years, he bestrides a hunter. Some teach without stirrups; but as in this civilised country every one rides with stirrups, the advantage is doubtful, the danger of serious injury is considerable, and the effect is to give an awkward seat; but if boys do ride without stirrups, it should be either bare-backed or with a cloth and sureingle. A saddle without stirrups is very dangerous.

Nothing is more absurd than the usual course of instruction in riding. In every other art, the tutors begin with the elements, and with those one at a time; but the riding-school teacher generally begins by encumbering a pupil who does not know how to sit, with double reins and a whip.

Teach the boy to sit first. Fasten the pony's head into the right place with a pair of reins buckled to the flaps of the saddle, and a standing martingale if necessary. Then put the boy into the saddle carefully, fit the stirrups to his legs, tell him to keep his shoulders back, his back *slack*, his heels down, and cross his arms across his chest. Then, repeating the cabalistic words “Heels down, back slack” over and over again, lead the pony about at a walk for a day or two until the boy gets his balance, or what the French happily call “*son assiette*.” Then give him a single pair of reins, and explain that in riding the hands are always to be kept lower than the elbows, and generally as low as the hips. Impress on him, “If you raise your hands you are lost,” and that the bridle is not a safety handle to hold on with, but a pair of lines for steering: “If you want to turn to the right, pull the right rein; if you want to turn to the left, pull the left rein.” These were the maxims of George D., the once celebrated steeple-chase rider. He spent hours in instilling them into his children, and with marvellous success. At ten years old, his boy and girl rode

thorough-bred horses, hunting in as perfect form as the most celebrated horsemen. He had an iron-grey pony, forty inches high, a miniature weight-carrying hunter, with a blood head, which, galloping at speed, would clear a hurdle nine inches higher than his own shoulders, and which actually cleared a hedge and ditch fifteen feet across. To see little D. ride this hot little brute at the hurdle, touch the pony's crop with his own shoulders as he leaped, and rise to his right seat as he landed, a dozen times in succession, was a sight which old steeple-chase jockeys and colonels of crack cavalry regiments wondered at and enjoyed.

The great point in teaching riding, is, that the pupil should never learn a bad habit. Old Chifney, according to one of his biographers, began his lessons in the art in which his sons became so famous, by teaching them how to hold the bridle of a wooden horse. "Good hands," to use a term familiar among horsemen, give and take; bad hands hold as if the mouth were iron and the reins to be gripped like the rounds of a dangerous ladder.

Therefore, as soon as a boy is old enough to understand the reason why, and has acquired a right seat and an instinctive grip of the saddle, put him on a pony or horse of good temper, but courage, with a light and delicate mouth; then he must "give and take"—a great art in life—and he will have to govern by skill, and not rely on strength alone.

There are boys and men who learn to ride, and ride well, by instinct, imitation, and practice, especially if they have good models before their eyes, and are not spoiled early by flattering toadies; but there are many men who never ride with any sense at all, although they ride all their lives. Some people seem to think that falling off does boys good. That is not the writer's opinion. A boy should, as a matter of course, learn not to make a fuss about a fall, or any other hurt or accident; and he who is not afraid will fall the most cleverly; but the first point of good horsemanship is not to fall until your horse falls; the next is so to guide and hold him that he shall fall as seldom as possible.

Many a fine boy has been cowed and spoiled as a horseman by being put on ponies too restive or spirited for his strength and immature seat. But there is a mistake in the other direction. Teaching is wasted unless principles are followed by practice, and unless what has been learned in the home park or the school is practised on rough ground and across country, up and down steep hills, across moors, and through woodland. For this purpose there is nothing better than an occasional day with the harriers; boys and horses both learn to be quick to turn, to stop, and to start again. No horseman or horsewoman is safe who has not learned to leap real fences, ditches, banks, and hurdles; for the quietest horse will buck sometimes, and the slowest ride end in an inevitable short cut.

Some people, stout of constitution and thick of skin, dwell fondly on the happiness of their school-days, but that is a kind of enjoyment

like a taste for bathing in the depth of winter, or for whole bottles of port at one sitting; it is more than every constitution can bear. For the writer's own part, while his school-days have ever been the subject of his most frightful dreams, in which sometimes a schoolmaster, and sometimes a tyrant senior, has been his nightmare, he turns to his pony-riding days with fond delight, not extinguished or diminished by the memory of many an exciting gallop in the best counties with flying hounds on horses good enough for any one of his weight, at an age when vanity and excitement were stronger than prudence.

No black care sits behind the boy who can ride, who loves to read, and has just entered on the world of poetry and romance. When well mounted, he takes his way alone, or with a party of young companions, galloping fast over the turf, walking slowly through broad woodland or over wild moors, excited, charmed, amused, full of wild, absurd thoughts realising a thousand romantic fancies, charging at Flodden or flying with Lochinvar. Our earliest horsey recollections go back to bare-legged days, when, for our health's sake, two or three times a week a tall dragoon (he seemed a very giant) called to take us a ride on a black hog-maned cross-eared pony twice a week. He used to walk beside us, holding us for safety by the leg. It was an ugly flat country, and our way was almost always by the side of a canal for an hour or so, up to a lock, where there used to be a long talk between the military tutor and the lock-keeper's daughter. To us he seldom addressed a word. We often longed to go some other way; the canal caused us undefined terrors, but we never ventured to complain either to the dragoon or nurse. We don't think we enjoyed these rides, for the pony was spiteful and did not encourage any delicate attentions; and our chief pleasure arose from the loud admiration we excited among ragged boys of our own age. When are we too young or too old to be beyond vanity?

In course of time we were promoted to ride alone on an ugly safe and stupid pony by the side of our parents in a gig, without, however, turning off the main roads. But the true glories of horsemanship were opened to us when, by great good fortune, at about twelve years old we caught the measles at school, and were sent to a farm-house to recruit. Close to the farm was one of the finest deer parks in England, and a hall, then for more than twenty years deserted by a great personage, the owner, for some mysterious reason, an exile on the Continent. Nothing was kept up except the deer, the game, and as much of the kitchen-gardens as it suited the head gardener to cultivate. The pleasure-grounds were a wilderness; but to my eyes, coming from a damp flat mining country, they were a perfect garden of Eden. There, glorious flowering shrubs flourished among weeds and long grass; and hares, rabbits, and feathered game sprang from the most unexpected places.

The king of the place was the head game-

keeper—a tall thin one-eyed white-haired old man, who had been a soldier, and who, whether he walked or rode, was always accompanied by an orange-coloured ape from South America. He had a grown-up son, whom he treated like a child, and it was this son's duty to kill the deer sent away for venison.

Our only companion was the parson's son, a boy of our own age. He had a famous pony, and our farmer soon found one for us. It was there we learned to ride, in a way that all the schools of Europe could never have taught us. Under the patronage of the gamekeeper, we two boys were made useful in helping to ride down and cut off from the herd, the deer that he picked out to shoot. It was a wild park, full of old timber, with varieties of hill and dale, all in a state of nature, as unlike the trim parks of the midland counties as Kensington Gardens resemble a Derbyshire moor. No colonel of cavalry was ever better obeyed than the old gamekeeper, as, glass in hand, he took his place on a convenient eminence and gave his orders. We were to keep our eyes on the buck, and never think about a fall. And we didn't. We raced up and down hill, twirled through trees, jumped ditches, and rolled over unexpected trunks of fallen trees, ponies and all, and then up and at it again! Never were boys more happy. Besides these deer hunts, we had slow rides through the woods, over hundreds of acres of grass-grown rides, alive with pheasants and rabbits. In the evenings we read Robinson Crusoe, Pope's Homer, and Walter Scott's Poems, and made ourselves the heroes of our reading. Only pony-riding romantic boys could have so enjoyed the sights and sounds of those deserted gardens and park.

As a final word, we would again say to fathers to whose purses the stable-door is open, in the course of education don't neglect the pony. Remember that your boy can never be a horse-man until he has learned to gallop up and down dale with slight hand, all rules forgotten, and keeping his seat by instinct.

WOLFISH HUMANITY.

EVERY superstition must have had a material beginning—some natural cause out of which it has grown like a gnarled and crooked tree from a shapely seed; there being no such thing possible to humanity, say the philosophers, as an original lie—lies being only exaggerations, distortions, or mistakes. A superstition, puzzling enough as it stands, is that which believes in the power of men to turn themselves into wolves and other wild beasts; what the Greeks used to call lycanthropy, and the Germans the wehr-wolf; what was the loup-garou in French and the vargr in Norse—the last word meaning a wolf or a godless man, at pleasure. It seems strange how such a superstition could have arisen at all; how, by what process of exaggeration or mistake, it could be said that men had actually been seen to transform themselves into howling beasts of prey, and then to run off

into the woods to slay and devour according to their kind. But here is a book* which, if it does not pretend to exhaust the subject from beginning to end, at least has gathered together some of its chief legends and most striking tales; beside giving a few rational hints and explanations, which help to make a trifle plainer and more intelligible one of the most obscure subjects we possess.

The world has always believed in what, for the convenience of a generic term, we will call lycanthropy; that is, the power of certain godless men and women to change their form for that of a wild beast—the kind selected at pleasure and according to the laws of physical geography—as wolves where wolves abound, bears where there are bears, dogs, cats, snakes, or hares, just as the country people are best accustomed or have been most annoyed. The Greeks believed in this power; so did the Romans; in the East, it has always been a popular creed; the northern and midland countries of Europe have been overrun with were-wolves seeking their prey, but not exactly from heaven. Norway and Iceland were the haunts of this dreaded power. The expression there for men who were lycanthropists was *eigi einhamir*—"not of one skin"—a graphic and pictorial touch, like much in that terse old northern tongue. When a man changed himself into a beast, he doubled or quadrupled his powers, having acquired the strength and capabilities of the beast into whose body he had travelled, in addition to the strength and capabilities of his natural and human state. He could do all that man or beast could do. If a fish he could swim, if a bird he could fly, if a wolf he could rend and tear and flee; always preserving the powers belonging to his human condition. Entirely bestial as to his form, he was nevertheless to be recognised by his eyes, which, let his transformation be as complete as it might, always remained human. If, as it has been suggested, the were-wolf were oftentimes an outlaw living in fastnesses, and clothed in the skin of a beast for his disguise (*vargr* meant outlaw, fiend, and wolf indiscriminately), that would account for the human expression of the eyes, the only feature which could not be concealed.

The story of Björn and Bera—perhaps of Beauty and the Beast—is to be so interpreted. Hring, the old king of Norway, being a widower, sent out his messengers to seek him a second wife. After a little wandering they found one, a bad and beautiful woman called Hvit, whom they brought home to King Hring to be made his queen and wedded wife; as came about in due course. Now Hring had a young son called Björn, a fine and comely lad well skilled in all manly sports and exercises, and growing daily in fame and strength. Björn's great friend and playfellow was Bera, the only daughter of a carle who owned a farm not far from the king's house; and Björn, the king's

* The Book of Were-Wolves, by Sabine Baring Gould.

son, and Bera, the carle's daughter, were wont as children to play together, and they loved each other well. King Hring was often absent from his kingdom, harrying foreign shores according to the manners of his time, and Hvit remained at home and governed the land. She was not liked of the people, nor of Björn, though she was always very pleasant with him, and spake him fair and friendly. For all that, he could not answer her in like manner, for he had no love for her. King Hring once went abroad, leaving Hvit to govern the land as usual; but leaving his son this time as well, telling him that he was to rule the land with the queen. Björn remonstrated and protested, saying that he had no love for the queen, and that he disliked the plan; but the old king was inflexible, and left the land with a great following. Björn walked home after his conversation with the king, and went up to his place ill pleased and as red as blood. The queen came to speak with him and to cheer him, and spake friendly with him, but he bade her be off. She obeyed him this time. She often came to talk with him, and said how much pleasanter it was for them to be together than to have an old fellow like Hring in the house. Björn resented this speech, and struck her a box on the ear, and he bade her depart, and he turned her from him. She taunted him with his love for Bera; then striking him with a wolf-skin glove, she said that he should become a rabid and grim wild bear, eating only her father's sheep, which he should slay for his food. After this, Björn disappeared, and men sought but found him not. In the mean time much havoc was wrought among the king's flocks, and it was all the work of a grey bear, both huge and grimly. One evening it chanced that Bera, the carle's daughter, saw this savage bear coming towards her, looking tenderly at her, and she fancied that she recognised the eyes of Björn, the king's son, so she made a slight attempt at escape. The bear retreated; she following, until he reached a cave, and when she entered the cave, there stood before her a man, who greeted Bera, the carle's daughter; and she recognised him, for he was Björn, the king's son. So she stayed with him in the cave; and by day he was a beast, and by night a man. When Hring returned from his harrying he was told these two bits of news, how that Björn had disappeared, and how that a grey bear, huge and grimly, was devouring his herds and flocks. And after a time he gathered together his men and dogs; and the dogs and the king's men came upon Björn in the shape of a bear and slew him; and poor Bera was made to eat of his (bear's) flesh, to her anguish and torture and despair.

Another saga, telling how Katla, Odd's mother, is able to hoodwink, and blind by her glamour the pursuers of her son, is also very curious. When first Arnkill and Thorarinn, with their companions, enter Katla's dwelling to find Odd, whom they intend to slay for his misdeeds, all they see is Katla spinning yarn from off her distaff. They search the house, but find no Odd, so they depart. But when they had

gone a little way from the garth, Arnkill stood still and said: "How know we but that Katla has hoodwinked us, and that the distaff in her hand was nothing but Odd?" "Not impossible," said Thorarinn; "let us turn back." They did so; and when they came to the door they found Katla in the porch stroking her goat and smoothing its hair and wool. Her distaff lay against the bench; so they thought it could not have been Odd; and they went away.

Then Arnkill stopped again, and said: "Think you not that Odd may have been in the goat's form?" "There is no saying," replied Thorarinn. So they turned back to try their luck again, sure that Katla could not deceive them this time. But all they saw now was a huge pig lying on the ash-heap; and though they chopped up the distaff, yet they found not Odd. But when they got the help of the old troll Geirrid and her blue cloak, then was Katla unable to throw glamour over their eyes again. "She started up from the place and lifted the cushion off the seat, and there was a hole and a cavity beneath; into this she thrust Odd, clapped the cushion over him, and sat down, saying she felt sick at heart. Now when they came into the room there were small greetings; Geirrid cast off her cloak and went up to Katla, and took the sealskin bag which she had in her hand, and drew it over the head of Katla. Then Geirrid bade them break up the seat. They did so, and found Odd. Him they took and carried to Berland's head, where they hanged him; but Katla they stoned to death under the headland."

Of course all this time the distaff was Odd, and the goat in the porch was Odd, and the pig lying on the ash-heap was Odd; Katla bewitching the eyes of the searchers so that they believed they saw such forms as she desired—an achievement like those of Gilpin Horner's in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, when

Seemed to the boy some comrade gay
Led him forth to the woods to play;
On the drawbridge the warders stout
Saw a terrier and lurcher passing out.

And again, or rather before, when

He lifted up the living corse
And laid it on the weary horse;
He led him into Branksome Hall,
Before the beards of the warders all;
And each did after swear and say,
There only passed a wain of hay.

This was the kind of thing that Katla did with her guilty son Odd, when Arnkill and Thorarinn were to be hoodwinked and deceived.

The berserker, of whom every one has heard, are assumed to have been men who wore bear or wolf skins over their mailed coats. "The word berserker, used of a man possessed of superhuman powers, and subject to accessions of diabolical fury, was originally applied to one of those doughty champions who went about in bear-sarks, or habits made of bear-skins over their armour." A wolf or bear skin would make a warm and comfortable dress for a man out in all weathers, and ramping about in all

seasons; it would be also useful in deadening the effect of the hard knocks; and by its grimness, ferocity, and ugliness, would help to intimidate the foe, sure to be superstitious though by no means sure to be cowardly, and easy to be awed if difficult to be terrified. Wherefore the berserkir or bear-clothed guerillas of olden times may have done something towards the establishment of the were-wolf theory, which madness, and outlawry, and diseased appetites, consolidated into a positive and undeniable fact. The berserkir used to work themselves up into a state of frenzy, in which they had a superhuman force and a diabolical ferocity. "As insensible to pain as the convulsionists of St. Medard, no sword would wound them, no fire would burn them, a club alone could destroy them by breaking their bones or crushing in their skulls. Their eyes glared as though a flame burned in the sockets, they ground their teeth, and frothed at the mouth; they gnawed at their shield-rims, and are said to have sometimes bitten them through, and as they rushed into conflict they yelped as dogs or howled as wolves."

It being in the mind of the priests that this berserkir rage was demoniacal possession, it was given out that baptism extinguished it; and as Christianity advanced, the number of the berserkir decreased; which was something gained, however done; for a more uncomfortable set of gentlemen than these berserkir, when their fits of rage were on them, could not well be. They slew all they came near, friend and foe indiscriminately; and the sight of a stalwart broad-shouldered Norseman, clad in his bear-skin, yelping like a dog or howling like a wolf, while he flung himself upon every living thing that came in his way, must have been appalling even to the strongest nerves. No wonder if the poor maniacs came to be regarded as either "possessed," or as men-wolves who changed their skins and their natures when the mania came upon them, and who were man, beast, and demon, all in one.

The strangest thing in this, as in all other branches of that odd delusion called witchcraft, is the glibness at confession of the poor wretches themselves, and the unaccountable romances they make up. Over and over again we come upon men and boys gravely confessing to the were-wolf superstition, telling how they changed their skin at will, then roamed over the country as ravening wolves, slaying and eating children wherever found. In almost all cases they have previously made a compact with the Evil One, either personally or by the mediumship of one of his emissaries; and they give particulars of the time and place of meeting, which are, of course, known to be all hallucination, but which, as circumstantial evidence detailed on oath, would hang the most innocent man in England. For the most part people of low and brutish intellect were these self-confessed were-wolves, retaining the power of dreaming dreams, but not that of distinguishing between dreams and realities. The confession of Pierre Bourgot, or Peter the Great as he was called, is one of

these singular bits of delusion. Peter tells how he was grieving over his flock scattered and lost through a terrible tempest, when up came three black horsemen; and after some conversation one of them persuaded Peter to forswear God, our Lady, and all saints and dwellers in Paradise, and to give in his allegiance to the Evil One. Peter did as he was bid, and kissed the stranger's left hand in token of submission, and his hand became black, and ice-cold as that of a corpse. He then obtained some salve, with which he smeared himself, and then he was in the form of a wolf. "I was at first somewhat horrified at my four wolf's feet, and the fur with which I was covered all at once," says Peter; but finding that he could travel with the speed of the wind, he accepted the fur and the feet as disagreeable conditions inherent to the situation, and became one of the most notorious and dreaded were-wolves of the time.

Another gentleman of the same habits, one Gilles Garnier, called the Hermit of St. Bonnot, because of his remote dwelling and secluded habits—not because of his sanctity, be sure—seems to have been a murderous cannibal, and no more. Perhaps he disguised himself at times in a wild beast's skin, for the better concealment of his identity when out on his horrid expeditions; but he was not so much insane—though confessing to having been a were-wolf—as he was hungry, poor, and cruel, and so satisfied his craving for food on human flesh, that being the easiest to be had. Jean Grenier, the boy-were-wolf of thirteen, was evidently a ferocious idiot—a thing more beast than human from the beginning. "His hair was of a tawny red and thickly matted, falling over his shoulders and completely covering his narrow brow. His small pale grey eyes twinkled with an expression of horrible ferocity and cunning from deep sunken hollows. The complexion was of a dark olive colour; the teeth were strong and white, and the canine teeth protruded over the lower lip when the mouth was closed. The boy's hands were large and powerful, the nails black and pointed like birds' talons. He was ill clothed, and seemed to be in the most abject poverty. The few garments he had on him were in tatters, and through the rents the emaciation of his limbs was plainly visible." He was a were-wolf according to his own confession, to whom one Pierre Labourant, who seems to have been none other than Auld Hornie himself, gave a wolf-skin cape which transformed him at sunset into the beast it represented; and in this state he used to attack, kill, and partially eat such unfortunate little ones as fell in his way—his were-wolfism, poor wretch, being just poverty, ferocity, and imbecility combined.

There are more of these child-eating men in Mr. Baring Gould's book; and there is no need to doubt this part of the confessions made by the wretched criminals, however much we may shake our heads at the wolf's paws and the fur growing inward. If they were, as is most probable, maniacs or idiots, it was not at all an unlikely form of madness; if they were

simply hungry, poor, and cruel, like the Hermit of St. Bonnot, it was not at all an impossible way of supplying their wants; for cannibalism, though infinitely revolting, is by no means out of course, as we all know. Brutalised by poverty and ignorance, almost out of all physical likeness to men, certainly out of all moral resemblance, we cannot wonder what the starving human animals of lone neglected districts will do. As well wonder at the instincts of lions and tigers, snakes and monkeys! For what is man without reason and education but a wild animal like the rest? The only marvel is, the active imagination of these degraded wretches, and how they were able to make up such connected stories, and give their falsehoods such an air of reality. All that can be said is, that superstitions are like diseases—epidemic and infectious; and that wild ideas once uttered, propagate themselves like measles or small-pox.

Then there is the instinct of cruelty to be considered, and how some people, else sane enough, have a morbid desire to inflict pain and witness agony. Horrible stories to this effect are given in the Book of Were-Wolves, specially the well-known story of Maréchal de Retz; and that other still more ghastly, because not so intensely mad and exaggerated, telling how Andreas Bichel was wont to entice young women to his house on pretence of showing them their future husbands in a magic mirror, simply for the pleasure of killing them and watching their dying agonies. The details of this demon's pleasures are unspeakably revolting. The case of Dumollard and his wife, which must be fresh in the memory of the readers of All the Year Round, is another case in point; though here, the miserable small gain to be had from the clothes and little savings of the poor victims, may be put forth as an incentive of equal force with that of mere cruelty. The story of the Hungarian lady who killed and tortured, sometimes with her own hand, young women, that she might bathe in their blood, and so make herself beautiful for ever, is also one of composite motives—sanity here sharing with cruelty. But the awful story of Gilles de Laval, Maréchal de Retz, before alluded to, reveals nothing but the frenzy of madness, and the demoniacal power of evil passions unrestrained.

The Gallician beggar Swietek, murderer and cannibal, would have figured as a were-wolf if he had lived a few centuries ago. Popular superstition and terror and disgust would have found expression in the belief that so much cruelty and crime could only belong to a man sold to the Evil One, and who had exchanged his human nature, with his form, for that of a ravening beast. He is horrible enough for any amount of after-exaggeration to gather round his name, and crystallise it into an enduring word of reproach and dread; while the mania of M. Bertrand, a French gentleman and an officer of singularly amiable disposition and gentle manners, which found expression in his delight at digging up dead bodies and hewing and hacking them to pieces, was simply a

case of partial insanity—a form of diseased brain, which medicines and regimen might have cured, and ultimately did cure. These creatures, and several others mentioned in this book, were monsters in the psychological sense of the word; but they were not man-wolves—they were not “as big as a calf, with tongues hanging out, and eyes glaring like marsh-fires,” as said the terrified inhabitants of the French hamlet, when the young Englishman proposed to walk across the swampy flats after sunset, and they tried to dissuade him by frightful pictures of the loup-garoux about. They were criminals, more or less fearful and disgusting according to the nature of their crimes, and the amount of moral responsibility still retained; but they were not lycanthropists of the old school—they had not the paws, and hair, and muzzle of a wolf, and they walked on two legs, not on four.

Witches had the power of transforming into animals not only themselves at pleasure, but any one of their enemies whom they wished to punish or disgrace. As asses bridled and saddled and carried to market—as ugly monsters, like the dear old Beast in the nursery tale—the enemies of a witch had a bad time of it, and many and grave were the troubles besetting them and the pitfalls dug for their ruin. “According to a Polish story, if a witch lays a girdle of human skin on the threshold of a house in which a marriage is being celebrated, the bride and bridegroom, and bridesmaids and groomsmen, should they step across it, are transformed into wolves. After three years, however, the witch will cover them with skins with the hair turned outward; immediately they will receive their natural form. On one occasion a witch cast a skin of too scanty dimensions over the bridegroom, so that his tail was left uncovered: he resumed his human form, but retained his lupine caudal appendage.” A belt of human skin about three fingers broad was a powerful engine of witchcraft in most places, and the Hand of Glory was a lantern by no means confined to the English gallows.

The Russians call the were-wolf Oborot, or “one transformed,” and a man can make himself into an Oborot by very simple and inexpensive means. All he has to do, is, to find in the forest a tree that has been felled, stab it with a small copper knife, and walk round it, repeating an incantation, which, being long and rather pointless and stupid, need not be quoted here. Then he springs thrice over the tree, and runs into the forest transformed into a wolf. In East Friesland it is still believed that when seven sisters succeed each other in one family, with never a break and never a boy, one of the seven is of necessity a wolf-maiden: wherefore young men are slow in seeking one of seven sisters in marriage; as the were-wolf may be his wife, to the general discomfort of his household. And even as his sister-in-law, it would not be a very desirable relationship, all things considered. The Serbs believe that the power to become a were-wolf is obtained by drinking the water which settles in a footprint left in the clay

by a wolf. With them the vampire and the were-wolf are in close connexion, if not identical; at all events, they are called by the same name, "vloslak." These creatures rage chiefly in winter, when they have their annual assemblies; at which each vloslak strips off his wolf-skin, and hangs it up on the trees around—the meetings naturally taking place in the forest. If any one gets possession of that skin and burns it, the vloslak is disenchanted, and his were-wolfism is at an end.

The Greek were-wolf, or *brucolacas*, is also closely related to the vampire; and the "modern Greeks call any savage-looking man with dark complexion, and with distorted misshapen limbs, a *brucolacas*, and suppose him to be invested with the power of running in wolf-form." The white Russians hold the were-wolf to be a man who has incurred the wrath of the devil, whereby, in punishment, he is transformed into a wolf and sent among his relations, "who recognise and feed him well. He is a most amiably disposed were-wolf, for he does no mischief, and testifies his affection for his kindred by licking their hands." But he is very restless, and always roving about from place to place; and we are not told if he ever recovers his human likeness.

These and many such little odds and ends of information on the subject of were-wolves and their kindred, are to be found in Mr. Baring Gould's book; by which we may learn how the superstition first sprung up and then grew strong; and how perilously near to wolves and other beasts, can evil passions, neglected education, and defective organisation, bring humanity.

HOLDING UP THE CRACKED MIRROR.

A GOOD many of us have recently been celebrating the three hundred and second birthday of our great national dramatic poet, William Shakespeare. At various festivals in town and country we drank to his memory in solemn silence, gave cheers for his glorious fame, and made speeches in praise of his genius. We said that he was not for an age but for all time, that none but himself could be his parallel, that his works were the most ennobling works that ever were written, and that the man himself, though dead and turned to clay long ago, still lived in the hearts and memories of all lovers of the British drama. And may the British drama flourish, we said, with a hip, hip, hurrah! and one cheer more for the great British dramatist, who had been an exemplar to all British dramatists up to the present time, and would be an exemplar to all British dramatists through generations yet unborn, while the English language continued to be spoken, and until the great globe itself should dissolve, &c., &c., &c.

It is wonderful how enthusiastic we become over a topic of this kind at the dinner-table, how firmly we believe in all the lofty sentiments inspired by the theme—and the wine. We

rave in the same way about Magna Charta; declare that it is our proudest boast, the bulwark of our constitution, the ægis of our liberties, and all that sort of thing; and not ten in a hundred of us, if we were catechised on the subject, would be able to say precisely what Magna Charta is, or how our rights and liberties are affected by it. In this way a name, or a sentence of speech, becomes a watchword and an article of faith with us, when sometimes the actual thing to which it refers has no existence. It is quite impossible that any man in his sober senses could speak with enthusiasm of Magna Charta, because at this time of day there is really nothing in that crumpled bit of parchment that any one but a lawyer or a statesman could directly connect with our present condition of existence. So we should find it very hard to speak with enthusiasm of the present state of the British drama, if we would only approach the subject with a full knowledge of its condition, and in a state of mind and tongue to talk sober reason. It appears to me that we never venture to talk about the British drama until we have had a few glasses of champagne. Let us see what can be said about it with the stimulus of a cheering but not inebriating cup of tea.

On that very day when we were celebrating the birth of our great national dramatist, and talking with glowing enthusiasm of the British drama, only one theatre in London was doing homage to Shakespeare's genius by performing his works, while the majority of the dramas then being played in our British theatres, in town and country, were not British, but were translations, or adaptations, from the French, dramatic pictures of a state of society and a condition of morality which are very far from being British, and with which British feeling has no natural sympathy.

No stress need be laid upon the fact that only one London theatre presented a play of Shakespeare's on the last anniversary of the bard's birthday. We cannot always be going to see Shakespeare, and perhaps, on the whole, we pay him as much homage, in the way of performing his plays, as could reasonably be expected. But how is it, with all our admiration of Shakespeare (which is undoubtedly genuine), with such a model of power and consummate art to testify to the dramatic ability of England, and teach us what is good and worthy to be admired,—how is it that we can tolerate the weak, colourless, distorted pictures of perverted nature which are held up to us in second-hand mirrors imported from France?

Is the true answer to the question this? The drama of our day is becoming less and less a high art, and in proportion as it has lowered its pretensions in this respect, the people, who have been steadily advancing in intelligence and culture, have become indifferent to it. The dramatic art has fallen behind in the race, among the other arts—so far behind that we do not expect it ever to come to the front again, and so we tolerate it, rather in pity than in anger, out of our old love for what it was.

We do not expect a cripple to run fast. When we can get nothing better to amuse us than a rattle, one rattle is as good as another. It is not worth while seriously to criticise the construction of a toy.

Glance at the other arts, and see if they have not greatly outrun the art of the drama. Take literature. We have among us, poets, historians, novelists, political and social essayists, whose works are equal, nay, in some cases, and in many respects, superior, to the best works of any past age of glory to which the optimist can point. Placed as we are at a disadvantage in a late period of time, when the mines of original thought are nearly, if not wholly, exhausted, the art of giving expression to true sentiments and sound thought, in good strong nervous English, has been cultivated in our day to the highest state of perfection. Essays that would have made a writer of the last century famous for all time, are lavished day after day, and week after week, upon newspapers and reviews, which are tossed aside the moment they are read. The great and rapid advance of every-day literature during the last ten years is one of the most marked features of our time.

This healthy growth and rapid development of the literary art is in part to be traced to the removal of an unnatural and vexatious restriction, that restriction being the paper duty. Since that impost was removed, readers have largely multiplied, and writers have multiplied. General literature has improved, because it has been relieved from trammels, and has been permitted to develop itself in a natural way.

Take, in the next place, the art of the painter. Amid much that is eccentric and experimental, we see an amount of general excellence which we look for in vain in past times. At the beginning of the present century, nay, even so late as the time of the Reform Bill, the walls of the Royal Academy were covered with daubs which would not now be honoured with a place on the stairs. There were a few men, about as many as you could count on the fingers of one hand, who were known to the public as great painters, and who had earned a title to be so regarded. The ruck were mere daubsters, who could neither draw nor paint. But now in the present day we have many painters who are worthy to be called great, while the common run of the craft has reached a high level of excellence, both in drawing and colouring. When we criticise the pictures in the Royal Academy now-a-days, we do so from the highest standpoint. Among the hundreds of pictures which adorn the walls, there are not, perhaps, twenty which fall short in the primary requirements of art. Imagination, poetical feeling, power, may be wanting; but the art of the draughtsman and the colourist is there at a hundred fingers' ends.

And here, again, the causes are the absence of all restriction; entire freedom to take advantage of the progress of the age; the opportunities afforded to bring art to the doors of the people. Most of the great pictures of the present era

have been exhibited to the people in all parts of the country. In this way some taste for true art has been spread abroad even among the humblest in the land; and the result is, that while rich persons give orders for paintings, the poor indulge a like taste, so far as their means will allow, with the best woodcuts and engravings. In this way artists are stimulated to put forth their best efforts, and the great demand for their works bears its natural fruit in a liberal reward. What may be called the art of science, has made, and is still making, marvellous progress among us, and this is due to the force of knowledge and inquiry, stimulated by the urgent requirements of a people becoming day by day more intellectual, more refined, and more prosperous: consequently less and less disposed to tolerate anything that is rude, clumsy, and inadequate to its purpose.

Every art is making progress, except the dramatic art. If we buy a book or a newspaper, it is because it is good of its kind. If we buy a picture, it is because it is a good picture, or because it pleases us; and we give more or less money for it, according as we estimate its value or its power to please. If we buy a chair, we want something more than a rude construction of wood to sit down upon; we want also shape, elegance of design, colour, ornament. It is only when we go to the theatre that we take any drama that is offered to us and pay the same price for it, whether it be good or bad. In every other department of art we must have something near perfection; but in the drama we are content with a makeshift.

In the course of twenty years, while the population has been rapidly increasing, while the means of communication have been extending in all directions, bringing many thousands of persons into London every day, while books and papers have been multiplying by millions, while wealth has been accumulating, and while the necessity for recreation has become more urgent, in consequence of the stress of labour which busy times impose upon the population, not a single new theatre has been built in London! At the west end of the town, the number of theatres is the same to-day as it was thirty years ago. Churches, schools, libraries, institutions, museums, music-halls, have multiplied. The theatre alone remains in statu quo. Naturally, this state of things has afforded no new scope for the dramatist; and the managers of theatres, secure in what is practically a monopoly, make the public take what they please to give them. Hence translations from the French, which cost little or nothing for authorship. The mischief which has been done by this filching from our neighbours is infinite. By lowering the price paid for dramatic work to the mere wages of a translator, it has driven capable English authors out of the dramatic field; it has accustomed the translators, whom we regard as our dramatic authors (or who, at any rate, regard themselves in that light), to believe, or to proceed upon the belief, that the English have no talent for dramatic construction, and that it is

useless to attempt original pieces. It has made the public familiar with pictures of life which mainly depend for their interest and piquancy upon unhealthy passion. As to the first point—the small sums paid for dramatic work. Managers have so long been accustomed to pay translators' wages, that they will give no more for original pieces. Indeed, they are disposed to argue that they ought to give less; for, say they, the French piece has been tried and has succeeded, whereas your original drama has yet to be tested. The rewards of dramatic authors, who are not themselves actors and managers, are incredibly small. The authors who write for the east-end and transpontine theatres rarely get twenty pounds for a piece. A more common price is ten pounds, and instances could be mentioned where authors have written three-act pieces for a pound an act. For an original piece which lately achieved a great success, ran upwards of a hundred nights, and brought the management several thousand pounds, the author received forty pounds. At the west-end of the town the highest price for a piece is fifty pounds an act. If an author had a comedy as good as the *School for Scandal*, or a drama as good as the *Lady of Lyons*, he would not be able, in the ordinary way, to obtain more than two hundred pounds for it. Farces and short pieces do not fetch more than fifty pounds at the utmost, while the average price is about twenty pounds.

In this state of the market, it is not surprising that capable writers should shun the theatre and turn to other branches of literature where the reward is more liberal, and where employment is more regular and constant. The newspapers and magazines afford, all things considered, a much higher rate of pay than the theatres. When an author contributes a three-act drama to a theatre, he furnishes the principal part of the entertainment, and any success that may ensue is mainly owing to his work; but a man who writes a single article for a newspaper or magazine assists only in a small degree, with many other contributors, to produce the work which the public require and pay for. And yet there are many anonymous journalists earning at the rate of a thousand a year, while scores of general writers for the press make very fair incomes, according to their ability. Suppose an author could write three plays in a year—which, if they were original, would be very good work—and could get them produced, what would be his gain? At the most, six hundred pounds. There are girls who earn more money by writing love-stories. In this country, dramatic writing is not a profession at all; it is a sort of amateur jobbing, which authors devote themselves to, more for the love than the profit of the thing. In France it is a profession, and those who follow it make large sums of money and live by their dramatic works, because in that country authors are paid at a rate in proportion to the success of their plays. When an author stands a chance of making a fortune out of a single

drama, it is worth his while to expend time and trouble in making it a good drama; but when his reward is limited to a hundred or two, as it is in this country, he cannot afford to give more time and trouble than that amount will pay for. Some English dramatic authors, who are also actors, have been able to dispose of their pieces according to the French system, and the arrangement has resulted to the advantage of all parties. Pains have been taken, good pieces have been written, and the result has been a large reward both to manager and author.

The idea that the English intellect has no capacity for dramatic construction ought surely to be sufficiently disposed of by a simple reference to the long list of brilliant dramatic works which figure in our standard literature. The very best literature which the modern world has produced is to be found in the English drama—in the works of Shakespeare. And if we come to our immediate day, we may point to the fact that the most successful dramas of recent years have been original, or adaptations of English stories written by Englishmen, and depicting English life and manners. The ingenious French plots which the translators admire so much, rarely succeed in keeping the stage. Scores of these—mere conjuring tricks with artificial incidents, made to fit into each other like the pieces of a fantastic puzzle—have been transferred to the English stage, and scarcely one of them has survived the year of its production. The only reason why these pieces succeed in any degree, shorn as they are of all that renders them acceptable to French audiences, is that they are produced at theatres to which the public must necessarily resort, if they go to the theatre. There is little choice: play-goers must accept these makeshifts or stay away. And it is a fact that the grown-up male population does stay away. The whole race of pit critics has died out.

And can many people doubt that the taste for the drama is lowered, and that the drama itself is degraded by the representation of plays which, losing their original interest, are not true pictures of French life, and, being incapable of receiving a new direction, are in no way pictures of English life? They are, for the most part, pictures of nothing. They might be described as diagrams of a mechanical dramatic puzzle, in which figures, made of wood, are arranged to execute certain manœuvres, like the toy men and women that dance in front of a street organ.

This state of things is in great part the result of a restricted field of action. Monopoly can sell what it pleases, and ask what price it pleases for selling it. London wants more theatres—not music-halls combining the drama with drink and tobacco, for that conjunction is simply impossible, and would never attract the respectable classes, if it could be effected; but theatres in the proper acceptation of the term. The limited number of theatres in proportion to the population, and the length of the run of suc-

cessful pieces, combine to deprive thousands of play-goers of any theatrical entertainment for weeks and months in succession. Free trade means a wider field of competition, and, in the case of the drama, competition means, not necessarily lower prices, but a higher article.

ALL IN THE CLOUDS.

I SEEK a goddess in the clouds. The goddess I seek, is Hope; but there is a perpetual cloud upon her fair forehead. That cloud, in fact, is all I ever see of my deity. I am so far like Ixion, that I seek a divinity, and I only find a cloud.

Not to be euphuistic, in plain words, I am blowing a cloud, and the cloud I blow is blown from a cigar, a real fragrant Havannah (an "Intimidada," to use the sonorous Spanish of the modern tobaccoconist). Of all the regions of cloudland, the region I prefer is the untrodden suburb, the last exhalation just risen, on which no castles in the air, no "chateaux in Spain," have yet been built by dreamers.

It used to be believed, some twenty years ago, that cigars were introduced into England during the Peninsular war. It was supposed that they came into use, with us, about the time when guitar-playing became fashionable, contemporaneously with those long blue cloaks for which the Duke of Wellington became remarkable, and by which old writing-masters at, say, Turnham-green academies are now chiefly distinguished. Before the date of that successful war, the young antiquary could find no traces of anything but an age of white churchwarden pipes and secret smoking. The clay pipe was a common homely thing, and under the ban of good society. Here and there a rough country gentleman might perhaps sink to the level of the churchwarden, but as for open smoking in the streets or public places, it was simply unknown, it was thought, until the cigar came from Spain, and the meerschaum pipe from Germany.

Now, the truth is, cigars are as old as pipes—perhaps older. To roll up a leaf and smoke it, was an easier thing to invent than to chop up a leaf, place it in a bowl, and smoke it through a tube. Fifty years after Columbus landed at San Salvador, a certain Girolamo Benzoni, who wrote a History of the New World, mentions the herb, called in the Mexican language "tabacco," and describes the smoking of cigars with all the disgust of a Solomon James the First. When the leaves were in season, says the offended Milanese, they picked them, tied them in bundles, and dried them near the fire. They then took maize-leaves, rolled them full of tobacco, and lighted them at one end, putting the other in their mouths. They drew the smoke up into their throats and heads, finding a pleasure in retaining the smoke until they lost their reason. Some would take so much of it that they would fall down as if dead, remaining many hours insensible. Wiser men only in-

haled enough of this smoke to make themselves giddy. "See," says Benzoni, "what a pestiferous and wicked poison from the devil this must be!"

Yet here I am, some centuries later, sitting on my lawn at Chalkerton under a beech-tree, whose clear bark is mottled with sunshine, and whose half transparent leaves are like fragmentary Venetian blinds between me and the shafts of Phœbus. Girolamo Benzoni has preached his unheeded sermon, but he sleeps his sleep, and the world smokes on. Millions of cigars are at this moment being lighted as morning incense to the blessed Genius of Summer Idleness, and I, too, burn my little fragrant torch in his honour.

Did smoking come into Europe by way of Spain, or had the Indian weed struck an earlier root in the sleepy East, where fever and lethargy alternately torment mankind? Many learned men have argued that there is in humanity an innate craving to smoke, and that even before tobacco came from America, Europeans smoked herbs. There is a floating tradition that somewhere in Ireland (Cashel or Kilkenny, I think) there is a tomb, and that on that tomb there is the recumbent statue of an early Irish king, and that in the lace that binds the helmet of that king there is stuck a small pipe, exactly resembling the little low-bred dudheen that an Irishman usually wears stuck in his limp rusty hat-brim. If this be so, then European smoking did not begin with the arrival of tobacco; and tobacco merely superseded all other herbs, conquering and driving them from the field by its superior flavour, aroma, and potency.

As a great man, to develop his greatness, requires not only genius but an age suitable to develop his capacities, and contemporaries wanting what he has to give them, so an invention, when it appears, must meet with a congenial age. If it meet with a century indifferent or opposed to it, it perishes, passes again into oblivion, or lies dormant until the fitting season arrive. Tobacco arrived just as it was wanted (at this crisis I bite off the tip of my third "Intimidada" as dexterously as a bullfinch nips off a hawthorn bud). The European had lost the untiring vigour of the savage, and had become a ruminator; he needed a frequent inducement to thoughtful idleness, and he found it in tobacco. He had grown dyspeptic, and he found a friend to digestion. He was looking out for a nervous sedative, as the Reformation was racking men's brains with theological questions, and nature brought him tobacco.

A young antiquary of the present day has lately been wondering, in that well-known and excellent antiquarian paper, Notes and Queries, about Shakespeare's systematic silence on the subject of smoking. (At this point a sudden difficulty in my "Intimidada" compels me to use my knife, after the manner of a lancet, wounding to heal.) Now, this is certain. Jean Nicot introduced tobacco into France from Portugal, whether he went as ambassador, about

1560; Raleigh's agents in 1584 discovered Virginia. Shakespeare did not die till 1616: that is, fifty-six years from the time when the first pipe was smoked in France; yet he never mentions smoking, or makes any allusion to it. Whereas his friend, Ben Jonson, wrote *Every Man in his Humour* in 1596, and in that play the fashionable smoker of the day figures largely; "drinking" tobacco, as the phrase ran, and discussing the virtues of a pipe with appreciation. No one sketched his own age more minutely than Shakespeare. Often he scaled and clambered among the far Alp peaks of the ideal world; but his daily life was spent, watchfully and shrewdly, in Cheap and at Ludgate, in "Paul's" and at Whitehall. His Mercutio uses his rapier, his pages are euphuists, his serving-men steal and wrangle, as serving-men then did. Parolles was just one of those bragging swindlers who then hung about London.

The new solution of Shakespeare's silence is this: that he was a prudent manager, who had no wish to rub the royal hair the wrong way. King James had set his face dead against the new fashion—nay, had even roused himself to write against it. He had proved it, with much dogmatic learning, to be unsuitable to a gentleman, a father, and a husband: uncourteous, uncitizen-like, the smoke thereof being like that of Tophet, "noxious, hateful, and abominable." How could Shakespeare praise smoking in the face of the royal counterblast? How could he, on the other hand, condemn it, if he loved tobacco's balmy and care-dispelling fumes? In this dilemma, he acted like a wise man and held his tongue. Had not Chapman, the translator of Homer, and Marston, the bitter satirist, and his own friend, protégé, and boon companion, Ben Jonson, got themselves into trouble by sneering at the Scotch tendency southward? Had not the executioner almost lifted his open shears towards their indiscreet ears and noses, and was he, Shakespeare, going to risk his cherished house at Stratford, for the sake of indulging the petulance of the moment? Not he.

Still, in spite of the king, the Elizabethan fop, truly a tremendous truculent fellow, with his wheel ruff, larger than any soup-plate; his Venetian doublet, pounced, slashed, and tagged; his hat plumed, brooched, and jewelled; his scented mustachios curling up to his eyes; smoked on with the doggedness of one insensible to arguments. He was choice in his tobaccos, had silver tongs in which his page brought him red-hot charcoal to light his small pipe, which he loved to discuss seated on the stage during the acting of *Twelfth Night*, or *Much Ado about Nothing*, the *White Devil*, or *Tu Quoque*. He resorted to the most fashionable apothecary to have his Nicotine minced on a juniper chopping-block, or to receive lessons from his professor in the art of "drinking tobacco," studying how best to perform those extraordinary feats, "the Euripus," "the rings in the air," "the flying globes." "The woodcock's head," as the pipe was then called, was as indispensable as the sword.

Dust and ashes (there goes the little white column of ash from the end of my cigar, down in a shower on the golden disk of a dandelion)! Smokers of centuries past, ye are gone, like the blue fume that has just passed from between my lips. Grave caciques, plumed with toucan feathers, smoking under the crimson jungle of cactus-flowers, while the humming-birds flittered round you like flying jewels, ye all are gone to dust, like the weed ye burned. Thoughtful Jean Nicot, leaning over the gunwale of the caravel laden with oranges that bears thee back to France, watching the dolphins leap and roll before the frothing keel, thou too art exhaled; Raleigh, shining in white satin and pearls in the turret of Durham House, thou also art dust. Dust likewise the solid men who fought in the ranks of the Ironsides, and on the evenings of Naseby and Dunbar sat pipe in hand under the woodside, singing sullen hymns, or listening to some grim preacher. Dust, too, Marlborough's tobacco-loving and grimly swearing grenadiers; dust, too, Frederick the Great's sharpshooters and Pandour-slaying dragoons. Dust, all dust! World, spin on while thou mayst, for thou, too, like the sun, art but glorified and coloured dust. We all do fade as doth this leaf, and turn to ashes like this weed!

The beech-tree over my head protests against this dust to dust theory, and with its thousand restless tongues tells me I am morbidly insisting on painful truisms that should not always be insisted on, since happiness is as real and actual as unhappiness, and better worth contemplating on a sunny morning. Look at the sky, how soft and blue it is—is that dust? See that scarlet geranium in the flower-bed at my foot, how it fires in the sunshine—is that dust? Yes, I am but dust in one shape, looking at dust in another shape, but I think well of it. What does the flower think of me? Does it think me beautiful, I wonder? I hope so, but I rather doubt it.

Strange custom this to obtain a hold over a busy age: this blowing of smoke from a little light roll formed of the leaves of a West Indian weed—the root of all evil, discovered in a distant island by Columbus and his immediate followers. For centuries it lay there unheeded. Socrates never smoked, nor Noah, nor the Pharaohs, nor Chaucer, nor Dante. (Gracious Heavens! how Dante would have brooded over a pipe, and seen in its smoke cycles of Paradise and abysses of its Antipodes!) The world seems, from all accounts, to have done very well through some few thousand years without a pipe. Physiologists, anatomists, tell me what good tobacco does to any man? Some say smoking tends to produce blindness (this is the last and most comfortable theory). It slackens the circulation, it retards the brain and the pulse, and it checks the heart; it lessens the nervous activity. So say its enemies. But very well, reply its friends; it helps digestion, it soothes the nerves, it aids reflection, it calms, it quiets, it comforts.

Haters of the consecrated weed, did you

ever on a dark night see a face and hand in the darkness turn suddenly orange with the flame of a fusee—and not regret your pharisaic abstinence? Powers above us, is it not grand to remember how, in past twilights, one has heard glorious thoughts emerge from the smoke of Charles Lamb's pipe, while presently shot by fireworks of drollery, or rose, like the low murmurs of an organ, passages from Chapman or Brown, or rich harmonies from the pages of Middleton or Marlow? The greatest talking of our later world has been held over the pipe-bowl.

The swallows flash past me as, overcome by the force of my own arguments, I whirl the burning stump of my fourth "Intimidada" into a green corner among the laurels, where I leave it burning, sullen and dangerous-looking as the fuse of a slow mine. But it is surely burning out, for all that—and so am I, for all this stray writing here written.

OUR SUBURBAN RESIDENCE.

PRIVATE CHARACTER.

[A REPRESENTATION has been made to us that the article entitled "Our Suburban Residence" (see No. 365) is not pure fiction, as it purported to be, and as we believed it to be, but has in it some colouring of distorted fact, calculated to misrepresent and injure an amiable and useful gentleman. We believe this representation to be strictly true, and we profoundly regret the publication of the article, though no Editor can possibly guard himself at all times against such deception. In making this reparation for our own innocent part in the wrong done, we publish the author's letter on the subject.]

TO THE CONDUCTOR OF ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

Dear Sir. I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your communication informing me that Dr. Laseron, of Upper Edmonton, has taken exception to a paragraph in the article entitled "Our Suburban Residence," published in No. 365 of your journal, dated the 21st of April last; of which unlucky article I am the writer, and which you accepted and published as a piece of fiction.

Dr. Laseron considering himself satirised or aimed at in that paragraph, under the mask of a certain imaginary personage called Zeller, I have no hesitation in avowing that I am exceedingly sorry for it. I never intended to impute any fraudulent conduct or motives even to that purely mythical personage; far less to Dr. Laseron, whom I never saw in my life, and with whom I never held any communication whatever, direct or otherwise.

Though conscious under these circumstances of the impossibility of my having been actuated by any malevolent feeling towards Dr. Laseron, I still deeply regret to have given him offence, and I hope he will accept my apology for having

unfortunately done so, as freely and fully as I hereby offer it.

I do not seek to make reparation by halves, and I feel that I have no right to object to my apology being published.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLE

"OUR SUBURBAN RESIDENCE."

LITTLE PEG O'SHAUGHNESSY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

WHEN I promised, Tom, to write you an account of Castle Shaughnessy and Peg, remember you gave me your word in return that you would not look at what I had written till you had gone back to your ship for good, and the ocean lay between you and the persons who figure in my story. Be charitable if you can, to some of those last, when you have re-pocketed the manuscript. But don't ask me to practise as I preach.

Gorman Tracey and I are so much akin that we had once a common relative.

"Gorman," said I one day, "that old lady at Ballyhuckamore is dead at last, and has left her estate to—"

"To you!" he said, with a grimace. "Like the luck of you rich chaps. Lord! To think of how that old lady used to pet me when I was a boy, and never saw you in her life. I wish you joy, old fellow, from the bottom of my heart! Ugh! How I envy you! Ballyhuckamore!" (musingly).

"A beggarly old place, I'll be bound!" said I. "A house like a barn, a potato-field, and a pigsty."

"Not a bit of it. But I won't tell you. Pearls to swine, ugh! Ballyhuckamore! I wonder whether little Peg O'Shaughnessy ought to be 'grown up' yet."

"Little Peg O'Shaughnessy?" said I.

"Yes, O'Shaughnessy of Castle Shaughnessy. But you don't know, and never will, you beastly bigot of a Saxon!"

"Little Peg?" said I again, as we walked on.

"A mop-headed little flirt who used to drop frogs down my back. Tip-top family, but awfully poor. Father ruining himself with fox-hunting even when I was there. Mother died of care. Peg's toes came through her shoes."

"Grown up now, you were saying?"

"Should think so. Lost count of the years."

"Any more pretty girls at Ballyhuckamore?"

"Bless your heart! there never was a place so overrun with them. When I think of the crowd that poor old lady used to have about her in Ballyhuckamore Hall of a Christmas-eve! I was always in love with half a dozen of them at a time. But you don't know. I believe I was to have married Peg and settled down at the Hall whenever I succeeded to the estate. What a gathering there should have been there this next Christmas if I had had your luck!"

"Then I'll tell you what," said I, "we'll have the gathering there, in spite of fate. You and I will go together; you shall introduce me to all the Ballyhuckamores, and we'll have such a house-warming as never was there before."

If we had not been walking down Fleet-street, I believe Gorman would have thrown up his hat and given three cheers. It was in July that we talked thus; and when December drew near, we had not forgotten our plan.

I need not describe Ballyhuckamore to you who know it. I never was so agreeably disappointed in any place. A snow-storm had just cleared away as we drove to the Hall by a short cut through the wood, with the dry branches crackling like fireworks under our wheels. A sulky red sun was dropping behind a copse, seeming to kindle sparks in the underwood, glowering on the boles of the oaks, throwing crimson splashes on the whitened knolls, and whispering a mazy murky light about the deepening gloom of the brown stripped trees on before us.

Gorman was in a state of wild exhilaration, and I myself was in unexpected delight with my new possession.

"Let us alight," I said, "and send this machine back to the village whence it came. We shall enjoy better to walk through this very jolly wilderness."

And so it was that we arrived on foot, and without fuss, at Ballyhuckamore Hall.

I felt curious to see the house, and quickened my steps, as we came up a by-path in the shrubbery which brought us out upon the gravel sweep under the front windows. I remember doing so, and how the next moment my attention was fixed, not upon the old house frowning before me, but upon a lady, who was standing on the top of my flight of Ballyhuckamore steps, with my Ballyhuckamore hall-door lying open behind her. And such a lady! She held up her green velvet riding-habit with both hands, and her little boots were almost lost in the snow, which lay thick upon the steps. She had a handsome brunette face, and bands of magnificent hair under her riding-hat. She looked about thirty years of age, had a perfect figure, and a jewelled whip, and seemed in the act of taking counsel with herself upon the weather. These were the items regarding her that I summed up during the space of some half dozen seconds.

"Tracey," said I, "is there any mistake about the place; or did you ask any friends to meet us here? Can this be little Peg?"

"Stuff and nonsense!" he said, "there is no mistake, and I know nothing about it. Peg's hair was as white as flax. Shabby Peg got up in that extravagant style! I have no idea who this may be. Some wonderful bird of passage."

Meantime the lady had tripped into the house, whither we followed as quickly as possible. We took off our hats to her in the hall, where she stood transfixed by amazement at our appearance, with her hand on the drawing-room door. We turned into the dining-room, where a speedy

summons brought the housekeeper to us, quivering in black silk, and blooming in a cap like a pickled cabbage.

"Oh, sir, an' I give you my word it's hardly ever I took my eyes for one blessed minute off the avenue since mornin'; an' to think of your slipping in unknowst to us after all! An' there's Lady Fitzgibbon an' her friends that were drove in for shelter from the storm two hours ago, an' her ladyship's runnin' in an' out, an' thinkin' she'd never get away before you'd arrive, sir. An' the dinner 'll be done to the minute, sir."

"And who is Lady Fitzgibbon?"

"Oh, sir, a beautiful lady—a widow lady, sir—who has taken Kilbanagher Park and furnished it splendid, so as it's fit to dazzle your eyes, sir. An' she's that rich, they say, she'd as lief eat bank-notes as bread-and-butter."

I looked at Tracey, and Tracey looked at me, and we both looked at the window. It was snowing more heavily than ever, and growing dark besides. There was only one thing to do. In a few minutes I was in the drawing-room, and had transformed the uncomfortable intruders into my bidden guests, who had promised to stay the night under my roof. Lady Fitzgibbon sat on my right at dinner.

How charming she was that evening! How her eyes sparkled over the champagne, and how those languishing eastern shadows under them enhanced the brilliancy of her complexion! How white her hands were, as she poured out our tea; how musical her voice was, as she told us anecdotes of every one in the neighbourhood. How amusingly she described the confusion of herself and friends when they heard of my arrival; how charmingly she ridiculed her own appearance. A riding-habit by way of evening dress! "A pretty figure!" she said. A very pretty figure I thought; and as for Gorman, he had become her slave without a struggle.

What was she talking of, that she kept my friend Tracey so enthralled? Doubtless, introducing him afresh to all his old acquaintances; for she knew every one, this charming widow, and was gushingly communicative about her neighbours' affairs and her own. Her friends resided somewhere far away (the Antipodes, perhaps), but she, being her own mistress, had chosen to come, for change of air, to this delightful country. She had resided here a year; she was the centre of society in the locality; she was adored by all who knew her. She liked amusement, and believed that country neighbours ought to be social, especially at the Christmas season. These were the facts I gleaned from her discourse.

O'Gradys, Desmonds, Burkes, O'Sullivans? Yes; she knew them all. O'Shaughnessy? Oh! (with a shrug), surely Mr. Tracey must have heard about poor Sir Pierce?

No, Mr. Tracey had not heard.

"Oh, he ruined himself, you know, and then he went astray in his mind. For some years he has not been able to leave his house except on Sunday, in dread of seizure for debt."

"And Pe—Miss O'Shaughnessy?" said Gorman. "I used to know her. Such a pretty little girl!"

"Ah, poor thing, I believe she has grown up very plain. She is never seen. How they live in that old empty castle, I cannot think. In town the other day (we call our posting village 'town' here, Mr. Humphrey), I heard a shopman say across the counter, before delivering a parcel, 'You'll pay me for this, Miss O'Shaughnessy?' And the purchase in question was only some yards of printed calico, to make a dress for herself, I should think. Heighho! it's such a very sad thing to be poor." Lady Fitzgibbon lifted her eyebrows, and smoothed down a green velvet fold of her dress, and looked quite able to make a supper of bank-notes.

I dreamed that night that I saw her doing so; but that after she had finished her meal she fell into convulsions as if she were poisoned. It was not a pleasant dream, and, somehow, I never could look at the widow afterwards without thinking of it.

And now, Tom, I have introduced you to one of my heroines, Lucretia Fitzgibbon. Mark her well. I am afraid I have not made her clear enough to you. Note her splendid eyes, her fascinating manner, the excellent footing on which she had placed herself with the world in general; lastly, her enormous riches. We returned with her to Kilbanagher Park the next day. Tom, what a place that was! Not a venerable old homestead like Ballyhuckamore; all new, bran-new, but gorgeous and voluptuous as a palace in the Arabian Nights. Astonishing little woman! What a taste! and what a purse! "Lucky, O'Gorman," said I, "will be that man who shall replace the lamented Fitzgibbon (was he knight, or was he baronet?), and hang up his hat for good at Kilbanagher Park."

But now for my other heroine. Tracey's old friends rallied round him, and we were soon on good terms with the best people in the neighbourhood. As for him, he had so far forgotten his former self, that I was obliged on some occasions to interfere and wake his memory.

"Tracey" said I, "I am not going to have my house-warming without little Peg O'Shaughnessy." (The people were to stay a fortnight at the Hall, and every amusement that Lady Fitzgibbon could devise was in course of preparation for their gratification.) "She may have grown up plain, and wear a calico dress, but I've had a curiosity to see that little girl ever since the first time you mentioned her. Her father may be doting, as they say, and Castle Shaughnessy may be the veriest old rat-hole in the kingdom; nevertheless, my dear fellow, for the sake of old times you ought to go and pay them a visit. And for the sake of new times and coming festivities, I will go with you."

Gorman abased himself for his negligence, and we set out together for the residence of the doting Sir Pierce, and his daughter who was "never seen."

If ever there were a wild old ramshackle barrack standing on a sea-shore out of all human

ken, and altogether within ghostly boundaries, that dreary edifice is you, O Castle Shaughnessy! A wide uneven sward, too unkempt to be called a lawn, straggled from the entrance down to a rugged beach. On one side stood the ruins of a chapel surrounded by the family burying-ground. The waves at high tide of a winter's night must break over the tombstones. Not a tree was to be seen, not a leaf of ivy clung to the castle walls, which were weather-stained in a way that made the windows look like eyes that were always weeping. We were admitted, after some parley, by a shabby old retainer with a knowing eye, who seemed to regard us as wolves in sheep's clothing. We entered a barren hall, whence all furniture had fled save some horns of elks brandishing their fangs over the several doors; and were bidden to wait in a long empty dining-room with marks of departed pictures on the walls, and some broken panes in the whistling clattering windows. Under these last, mustered the huge cavernous rocks, snug berths for smugglers' craft, among which the green angry sea writhed, drenching them with torrents of foam. A monotonous thunder from without made bass to the shrieking of the wind through the crannies of the room.

"Poor Peg! poor Peg!" said Tracey, staring into all the blank corners. You see we had lunched at Kilbanagher Park, and the contrast between that dwelling and this, was, to say the least, noticeable.

The man came back and conducted us through endless dilapidated staircases and passages. It seemed that Sir Pierce was not so far doting but that he remembered an old friendly name. We were led into a small room at the south side of the castle, into which seemed to have been gathered all the fag-ends of comfort which had survived the general wreck of that place. Alack! they made a sorry show after all. Poor Sir Pierce, a feeble old man with a restless choleric face, sat by a fire of turf logs built on a flagged hearth. The floor had no carpet, the windows no curtains, the master's arm-chair was worn by the constant chafing of his impatient body. A tame eagle sat on the shoulder of an attenuated couch in the window, with his bright eye fixed on the sinking sun.

The old man rose grandly, and received us with the air of a prince giving audience to subjects; but, looking in Tracey's face, broke down and burst into tears. He was not quite astray in his mind after all, only a little maddened by pride and misfortune. He soon resumed his state.

"Bid some of those people tell Miss O'Shaughnessy I wish to see her," he said to his attendant.

"Those people" were probably the shades of departed servants who had once tripped over one another in Castle Shaughnessy. The one shabby old retainer bowed his grey head and went.

Miss O'Shaughnessy was out walking, but presently made her appearance, evidently quite unprepared to behold us visitors. She was a tall girl wrapped in a plaid shawl, which looked

as if it had been washed. She had no trimming on her hat but a thick black veil, which was thrown backward over it. She looked so scarlet-cheeked on entering, that I was surprised to see how pale her natural complexion was when she had thrown aside her hat and seated herself at the other side of her father's chair. She had hazel eyes, and a profusion of light hair clinging in crushed masses to her head; but I did not like to look at her much; she seemed so shy and proud. The eagle left his window immediately, and mounted guard on the back of her chair.

Sir Pierce's conversation was piteous to hear, so grand, so inflated, so ill matched with his surroundings. Yet he was not out of his senses, only anxious to remind us that he was O'Shaughnessy of Castle Shaughnessy. He tortured Peg, who bore it all with the constancy of a martyr. Now and again there was a burning blush, and a hurried glance in her father's face, then she was pale and proud and passive.

"Order wine," he said at last, with a grand air, as if he knew that a banquet was in course of preparation.

"Father," she said distinctly, and looking him firmly in the face, "you know we have no wine. There is no such thing here."

Well, I am not going to dwell further on the memory of this visit. Sir Pierce turned white, then purple, and we thought he was going to have a fit. A glance of entreaty shot from Peg's piteous eyes to mine; and we departed.

"Ah, well," said Gorman, "we have got enough of that place. Poor Peg! she is prettier than ever."

We passed out again through the hollowness and the emptiness, the mildew and the rust, and the dreary fallen greatness, of Castle Shaughnessy. Lady Fitzgibbon prattled on my left that day at dinner, and when the champagne corks began to fly, I thought I heard her say (or at least some woman's voice), "Father, you know we have no wine." Of course it was a fancy. Trinkets and smiles had Lucretia, but that pained earnest tone was no part of her.

I need not detail to you, Tom, all our schemes for inducing Peg O'Shaughnessy to be one of our house-warming party. She came against her will, but in obedience to her father's commands. A carriage was sent for her, with muffling, for it was a bitter frosty night, and good Mrs. Daly, my housekeeper, had lived once in the O'Shaughnessy family, and had a kindly regard for the motherless girl. We expected her at dinner, but she did not arrive. What could occasion her delay? A fit of Sir Pierce's madness, a need of decent garb, a passion of pride at the prospect of appearing among those who had talked of her misfortunes? A hundred such reasons were hinted at among the ladies after dinner, with many a "Poor thing!" and commiserating shake of the head. I remember the night well. The moon was bright upon the snow outside, and within every hearth was blazing, every shutter shut, and every room and passage full of light and warmth and pleasant sounds of life. The

drawing-room was a perfect picture of comfort, with its winter logs burning, its wadded curtains spread before the wide windows, its wreaths of holly already clinging to the picture-frames, and its social company. There was a group around the piano, a happy disposal of couples throughout the room, and Lady Fitzgibbon had a coterie gathered round her while she assigned the parts for certain forthcoming charades. Tracey was leaning over her chair, sulky with jealousy because she was bestowing most of her attention on me: which she usually did. Some one suggested Miss O'Shaughnessy to fill an awkward gap in the cast, and another remarked, "She may not be here."

"Ah, no doubt she will be here," said Lucretia, dropping her voice and eyelids just the least bit in life, and speaking to her nearest female neighbour. "What has she left to hope for in her position, except an advantageous marriage? Poor girl, no doubt she will come!"

Upon this, I removed Gorman's cause of jealousy, by taking myself away from the drawing-room, and out to the front door to look at the night. What was it to me whether a ruined fox-hunter's pretty daughter was coming to my house on a matrimonial speculation or not? But two of my best horses had gone in that carriage, and I was beginning to be uneasy lest something might have happened to them by the way. I went round to the stable, quietly saddled a horse, and cantered up the road leading seaward towards Castle Shaughnessy. My fears were realised. At the top of a high hill I found the carriage, sunk into a rut concealed by the snow. A smith was busy at the wheels, surrounded by a little group of lookers-on, and a lantern glared on their faces. At some distance a dark figure was standing alone, over against a white fence. This was Peg, with a little hood drawn round her head, and the moon shining on her face.

Hearing that the carriage would not be ready for some time, I gave my horse in charge to one of the men, and offering myself as escort to the young lady, asked her to proceed with me on foot towards Ballyhuckamore. She was most unwilling to do so, almost beseeching me to return as I had come, and leave her to follow at the blacksmith's pleasure. Of course, I would not hear of that, and she consented at last to accompany me.

I don't know that there was anything peculiar about that walk, and yet I have a singularly clear recollection of it. I had often travelled the same road, followed the same paths and turnings on the outskirts of the wood, seen the moon looking through the same rifts among the trees, and yet, somehow, it all seemed new that night. I did not attempt to account for this phenomenon. I tried to draw out my companion. She conversed with naive cleverness, all the while keeping a touch of defiant pride in her manner, as if she felt herself in the presence of a natural enemy, and was determined not to be tricked into forgetting it. I humoured her in this, thinking her a child of nature, who knew nothing of the world.

As we drew near the Hall, her hand began to tremble on my arm, and her replies grew vague and absent; at last she stopped short, in a tremor of distress.

"I am bitterly ashamed of myself, Mr. Humphrey," she said; "but I am terrified at going into your grand house, among your proud guests. That is the truth. The poor and unhappy should keep away from the rich and gay. Oh, I wish I could go home again!"

She burst into passionate tears. Now in her distress I saw how young she was—a mere untutored girl. Reserve had before made her more womanly than her years.

"My dear child," I said, "—pardon me—I am so much older than you. The pride is all on your side. I do not want to preach you a sermon, but poverty is not a crime; it is not even the worst of misfortunes."

"It is, it is," she interrupted, vehemently. "It is the cruelest of all, the most utterly killing and crushing. To escape from it, I would——"

"Marry a prince, or turn popular authoress?" I said, smiling.

"Or rob a poor-box," she said, with a curious little grimace of tone. "The two first alternatives being out of my power."

O Peg, Peg! How those words afterwards rose up and bore witness against you! Was all this an artful little scene to engage a rich man's interest? Tears, moonlight, a sweet face, and a passionate voice! Before a fortnight, a dozen of my lady friends would have been ready to swear to your plotting. Yet I do not see how you could have made the carriage break down, Peg. Lucretia's drop of poison lurked in my ear, though I thought I had washed it out a dozen times.

After this little burst, she dried her eyes, like a child who has had its passion out; and we went on as before. Of course it was only to give her time to calm herself that I chose the longest way to the Hall; for I was very much on my guard.

"The carriage is here already!" I exclaimed, seeing, as I thought, the identical equipage we had left behind us standing at the hall-door. But no, here were servants running about, dragging down luggage, and carrying in wrappings, while a black man was gesticulating in the portico, and giving orders which nobody seemed to understand. What was this? Some wonderful arrival, unexpected as Cinderella's at the prince's ball? On the stairs half a dozen men were staggering under the weight of a large iron coffer, or safe, while at the top of the first flight stood a curious figure, eagerly watching their operations. This figure was a thin yellow-faced little man, wrapped in a fur-lined gown of vivid eastern colouring. Ill health and discontent were in every line of his face, and his eyes were fixed with anxious greediness on the ascending box. The housekeeper was below in the hall, wringing her hands because there was no room prepared for "master's uncle." From this I knew who my visitor was:

Giles Humphrey, my father's only brother, who had gone to India when a boy, and had scarcely been heard of since.

I pressed past the burdened carriers on the staircase, and presented myself to my strange relative. He had at the moment no thought to bestow on me, and merely replied to my words of welcome by beseeching me to show him the way to the securest chamber in my house, so that he might direct the staggering men to deposit their load there.

I took him to my own room. This was a large apartment at the end of a long corridor, lined with the doors of other chambers. It was reached by ascending three broad steps, and a good-sized dressing-room opened off it. You may not remember them, Tom, for those rooms have fallen into disuse. Into the furthest corner of the dressing-room my uncle's coffer was carried, and then Giles Humphrey himself began examining the thickness of the shutters and the weight of the bars that held them fastened, the stoutness of the panelling of the doors, the trustworthiness of the locks, and even the ward of the keys. I had thought the shutters good, but they displeased him. On his opening one a little to glance suspiciously out on the white moon and the snow, a shock-headed bush of ivy bobbed suddenly against the pane, and almost scared his whimsical senses away. He immediately had the window fastened up, and sent off a messenger post-haste for the smith who had mended our carriage to make him a wonderful iron shutter-bar, twice as large and as weighty as those which had for generations sufficed to guard the lives and properties in Ballyhuckamore Hall. He then ordered a second set of curtains to be put up within the already comfortable and carefully-drawn hangings, sand-bags to be laid down at every spot where there was a possibility of crevice in the woodwork, at the same time heaping fuel on the already blazing fire, till the hearth-place began to glow like a furnace. Only then did he think proper to notice me, as he sat in my arm-chair, cowering towards the fire, and warming his skinny fingers at the flames. He had arrived in England only a few days before, and not finding me at home, had followed me here. I joked him about his wonderful strong-box.

"Hist! nephew," he said, with a look of alarm, which the dancing firelight extravagantly heightened on his parchment face, "it holds money, riches, gold, jewels! You don't think I sold my youth and health for nothing, boy, out there? You don't think I sold my youth and health for nothing? Eh?"

"But why bring it here to torment you with anxiety? Why not leave it safe in a bank in London?"

"Leave it?" staring at me as if I were a burglar; "part with what I earned so hard? Make a present of my savings to Messrs. So-and-So? Eh, nephew, what a silly schoolboy you are still! By-and-by you will know the world, my lad."

"Well, well!" I said; "you will come down and see my friends."

I told you, Tom, that this room was at the end of a long corridor. At the lower end, this corridor was crossed by another, a shorter one, from which the stairs descended. As my uncle and I turned the corner proceeding towards the stairs a door opened suddenly before us, and two womanly figures appeared on the threshold, thrown forward by the fire-light from the chamber behind them. Lucretia Fitzgibbon with her arm thrown gracefully round the waist of Peg O'Shaughnessy. Did the star of all the country drawing-rooms mean to patronise the poor little black sheep from the mountains on this her first entrance into society? *The doors of their chambers stood opposite on the passage.* Lucretia had kindly fluttered across, introduced herself to the trembling débutante, and taken her under her wing. "Good Lucretia!" I had almost cried; but the hall lights fell full on the two faces as they descended, and I thought the sparkle of her eyes and teeth more false than they had seemed before. My lady was dressed in voluminous folds of amber silk, bedizened with laces and diamonds; Peg was dressed in a straight black gown of an antiquated brocade, which she must have ransacked from some great-grandmother's wardrobe, standing on some dim upper passage of Castle Shaughnessy. She had folds of crimped white muslin at her throat and wrists, and a black ribbon twisted about her head, gathering up her crisp hair, and tied in a little knot upon her crown. As they swept down before us into the light below, my uncle Giles pinched my arm so wickedly that I started:

"Who is that woman, nephew? By all the diamonds that ever blazed, I have not seen such a woman since I was a boy!"

"Which?" I asked.

"Not the flashy yellow one," he answered, "but the one with her head tied up."

This was the beginning of my uncle's admiration for Peg. In the drawing-room we found the ladies in full expectation, and quite prepared to make a lion of him. The news of the wonderful coffer had reached them, and the fetching of the smith had caused no little excitement. It was current that some extraordinary locks were to be put upon the chamber doors, of which only Giles Humphrey and his servant knew the secret, and that the windows were to be barred outside like the windows of a prison. Even Peg's arrival was now a matter of small importance. There never was such a hero as Giles Humphrey that night. He sat in the warmest corner by the fire, and monopolised the snuggest chair. He wore rings worth a king's ransom, and, audaciously defying custom, wore a gown lined with the costliest fur. He supported his feet on a footstool, while his black servant wrapped his knees in a royal rug. Then he spoke to the ladies with a mischievous rudeness, while his eyes paid them homage every moment. And

then he might virtually be said to be sitting on that wonderful coffer stuffed with riches, which no doubt all present saw in their mind's eye supporting his puny limbs, but which, in reality, stood modestly hidden in its corner upstairs under the shelter of a gorgeous piece of tapestry, flaming in gold and colours. And when I conducted its owner to his chamber that night the black man was squatting upon it with crossed legs, like a grotesque carving on a whimsical pedestal. He turned a somersault upon it, by way of obeisance, when his master appeared, and, while I stayed, presented a long cane, from which Giles Humphrey drew a glittering sword.

"This is my bedfellow," he said, grinning over it, and placing it on his pillow. "I hate locks, for fear of fire," with a glance of alarm over his shoulder at the blazing grate. "I will not be locked up, to run the risk of being burnt to death. But if any of the people in your house think to meddle with my little box over there"—he raised his voice, and seizing the sword again, brandished it at the black servant, and chased him out of the room, bidding him go and tell about the weapon in the servants' hall.

From the time of my arrival at Ballyhuckamore to that night, I had found myself the lion of the neighbourhood, and had had the felicity of knowing that I was the most important among the men in those days assembled under my roof. But now all was changed. The days of my greatness were over. A mightier than I had arisen, and another king reigned in my stead.

I should not have minded if they had elected Gorman Tracey, or some one of the many decent fellows about me, to fill my place, but it was irritating to see the worship transferred from one's manly self to the shrivelled face and shrieking voice of the owner of a box up-stairs; to see the silks and muslins making their genuflexions at the shrine of a mere mummy; to know that a heartless machine was receiving the flattery of mammas; that a capricious idiotic will was directing the motions of blushing hand-maidens. And the hardest part, the very worst of it all, was that Peg O'Shaughnessy was the foremost of the band of sirens who sang round Giles Humphrey's chair.

For here I will own to you, my Tom, that by this time the stray little black sheep from the mountains had made herself a fold in your friend's foolish heart. Was it fate so relentless, or that quaint black gown so demure, or a head of crisp fair hair, or a pair of steady grey eyes, or was it a very sweet voice full of musical dignity, or a timid step which seemed always owning itself a trespasser when treading my Ballyhuckamore carpets?—Was it all or any of these things which transformed your sober friend into the most loving of jealous lovers, crafty enough to weigh little words, and count up smiles, and disregard all worldly wisdom? You cannot tell me, and assuredly I cannot tell you; but in that frosty house-warming season Peg bloomed up under my eyes the only blossom of her sex I had ever coveted for my own wearing.

Yet, for many days, Peg was as Giles Humphrey's right hand. I was shunned with a blush and a hasty word, while the crusty old millionaire was nourished with kind attentions, and sweet companionship. She helped him to his coffee, she cut the pages of his newspaper, she read to him, and adjusted his footstool. I believe she even stitched him a pocket-handkerchief or something, sitting by his side, with her pale fair cheek turned towards him. She was the envy of the drawing-room. If this pen had not forsworn sentimentality, it might describe to you how I groaned at times that circumstances should have made of my Peg a desperate woman, ready to marry a mummy as an escape from poverty, and how at other times I scorned her as an artful heartless Peg, not worth my pity. But I may tell you how they whispered about her all over the house. Whispers in the drawing-room, whispers over the bedroom fires, whispers all through the passages; on fine days even whispers out in the garden, and away abroad among the woods. Buzz, buzz, buzz. Peg O'Shaughnessy was trying to entrap the millionaire. And, oh dear! who could say that Lucretia Fitzgibbon was not kind, and even sisterly, to the shy friendless girl, who was a stranger among strangers?

And did no one dare to speak above a whisper, you will ask, and say a word for Peg? Oh, ay!—there was one good little lady of small social consequence, who ventured to suggest that the whole party stood aloof from the girl, criticising her; that the poor thing felt herself apart from the rest of the ladies; that she had no pretty morning dresses to eat her breakfast in, no handsome evening dresses to eat her dinner in, no fine riding-habit to go a-riding in; and that these wants usually press upon the female mind. That she had only one straight black gown for all times. Further, that, being accustomed to wait on an old man, her father, she had taken naturally to waiting on Giles Humphrey, who was an elderly man, to say the least; that her seat beside his chair was a harbour to her—not a pleasant one, perhaps, but still a harbour. These things were said by the blessed little lady of small social consequence, but who heard them?

It was at this period of affairs that one evening, jewels being the subject of conversation, Giles Humphrey, having drunk wine, set his eyes a-twinkling, and began to brag of certain wondrous trinkets which were in his possession, and the like of which had never (said he) gladdened the eyes of any of the assembled company. A gentleman present, who was a judge of such matters, twitted him to make good his boast, whereupon the little man's slow blood got up, and he rushed to his chamber, knocked Jacko (so the black man was called, from his likeness, I suppose, to a monkey) off his perch on the coffer, and presently came down with a bag full of jewels fit to startle the eyes of any prince in the Arabian Nights. There were

necklaces, bracelets and bangles, bodkins for the hair, and earrings weighty enough to tear the flesh of delicate ears; gems of as many hues and cuttings as puzzled Aladdin in the cave. There were dazzling necks in plenty and arms bare to the shoulder all round about Giles Humphrey, on which he might have displayed his treasures to advantage, but it was on Peg that he chose to hang them. He stuck bodkins of blazing diamonds in her hair; clasped a dozen chains and necklaces round her neck till they dropped below her waist, making her bust one flaring mass of splendour; put bangles of gold on her ankles; and made her bare one round white arm, which he shackled with bracelets. Blushing with confusion, and smiling in amusement at being so bedizened, Peg looked as quaint and as radiant as some rare old-fashioned princess stepped out of an illuminated legend. Many an eye saw beauty in her at that moment which it never had seen before. For my part, I thought she had looked more beautiful in the scarlet and white flowers which I had given her for her bosom that morning. Where, by the way, was Lucretia Fitzgibbon during those five or ten minutes of Peg's magnificence? Positively I forget. I remember that a female voice (could it have been hers?) murmured in a delicate under tone that it was a pity Peg had not a right to wear the jewels, since they became her, so well; and that this was the signal for my gallant uncle to begin to unclasp them and gather them into their casket again as fast as he could. As one after another dropped away from her, Peg grew pale and ceased to smile. Watching her curiously, I saw a strangely eager stern look come over her face as bauble after bauble disappeared. Once, for a moment, her cheeks flushed, and a flash of longing sprang into her eyes, but it faded away again and left her pale and thoughtful. I divined that she was thinking how much a few of those trinkets would do towards relieving the distresses of a poor old broken-down father, and restoring the comfort of the barren fallen home of the O'Shaughnessys. Oh, Peg, Peg! Why did you let me see that look!

It happened that the last of the ornaments which she relinquished—a certain bracelet—had been clasped too tightly on the swell of her plump arm, and there was a difficulty about getting it unfastened. One after another, we all tried our skill upon it, having each ample time as we did so to observe the fashion and the richness of the ornament. The groundwork was a broad belt of gold, enriched with the most exquisite Indian filigree work, and this band was studded with at least a thousand tiny precious stones of every hue. Mark that cursed bracelet well, Tom, for it will reappear in my story.

MR. CHARLES DICKENS'S READINGS.

MR. CHARLES DICKENS will read at Aberdeen on Wednesday 16th; at Glasgow on Friday 18th; at Edinburgh on Saturday morning the 19th; at St. James's Hall on Tuesday the 22nd, and Tuesday the 29th; and at Portsmouth on Thursday the 24th, and Friday the 25th of May.

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